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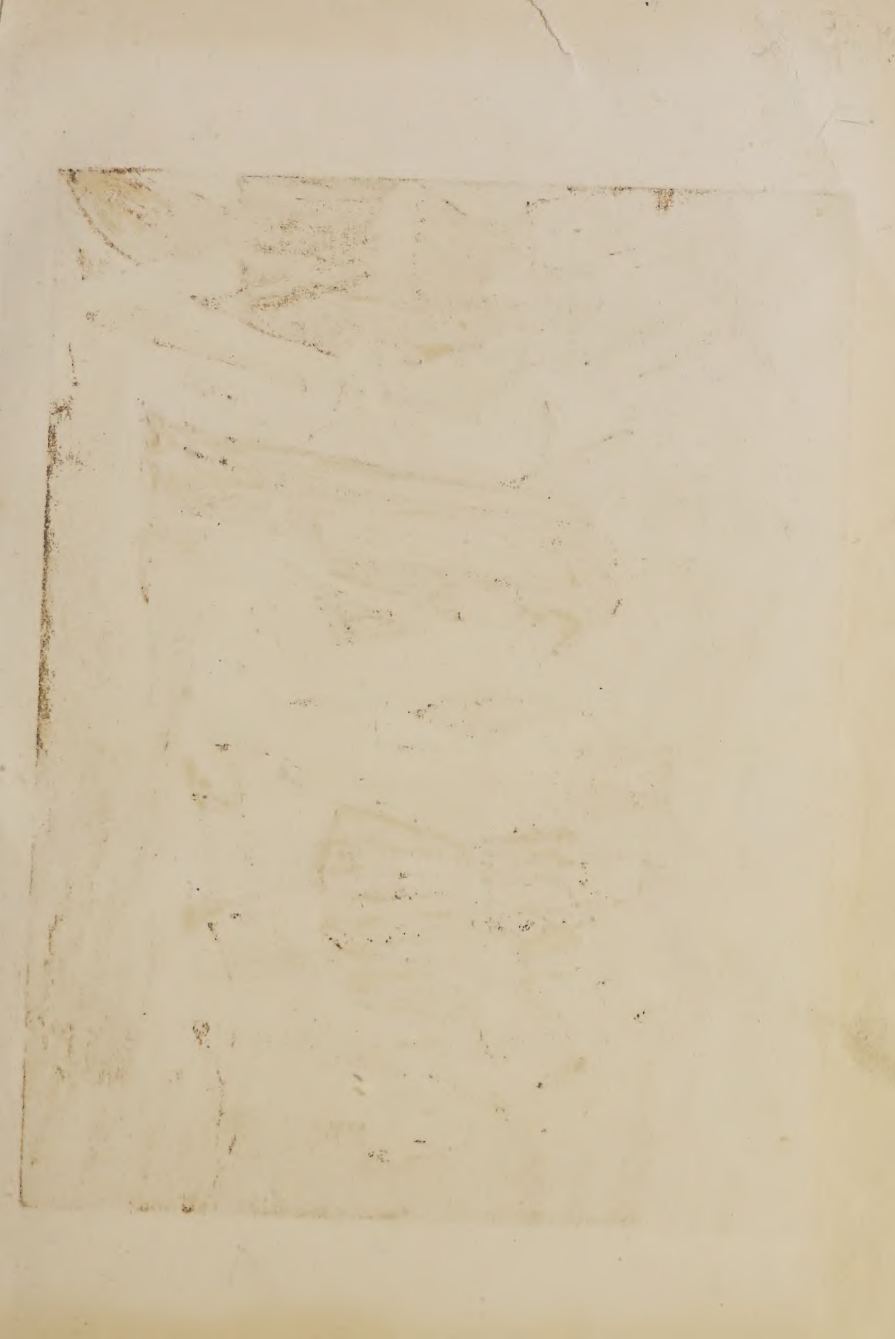
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OF THE
PATRIARCHS
BY
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Patriarchs

UNFOLDED AND ILLUSTRATED
BY

THE REV. JOHN CUMMING, D.D., F.R.S.E.

John. F. Shaw & Co. 48 Paternoster Row.

LONDON

1865

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THE

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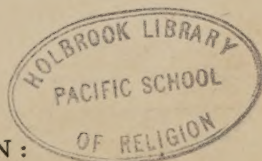
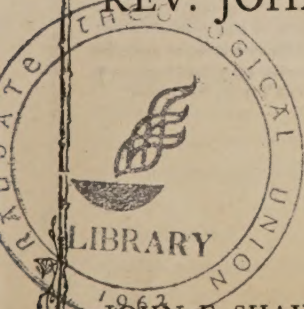
OF

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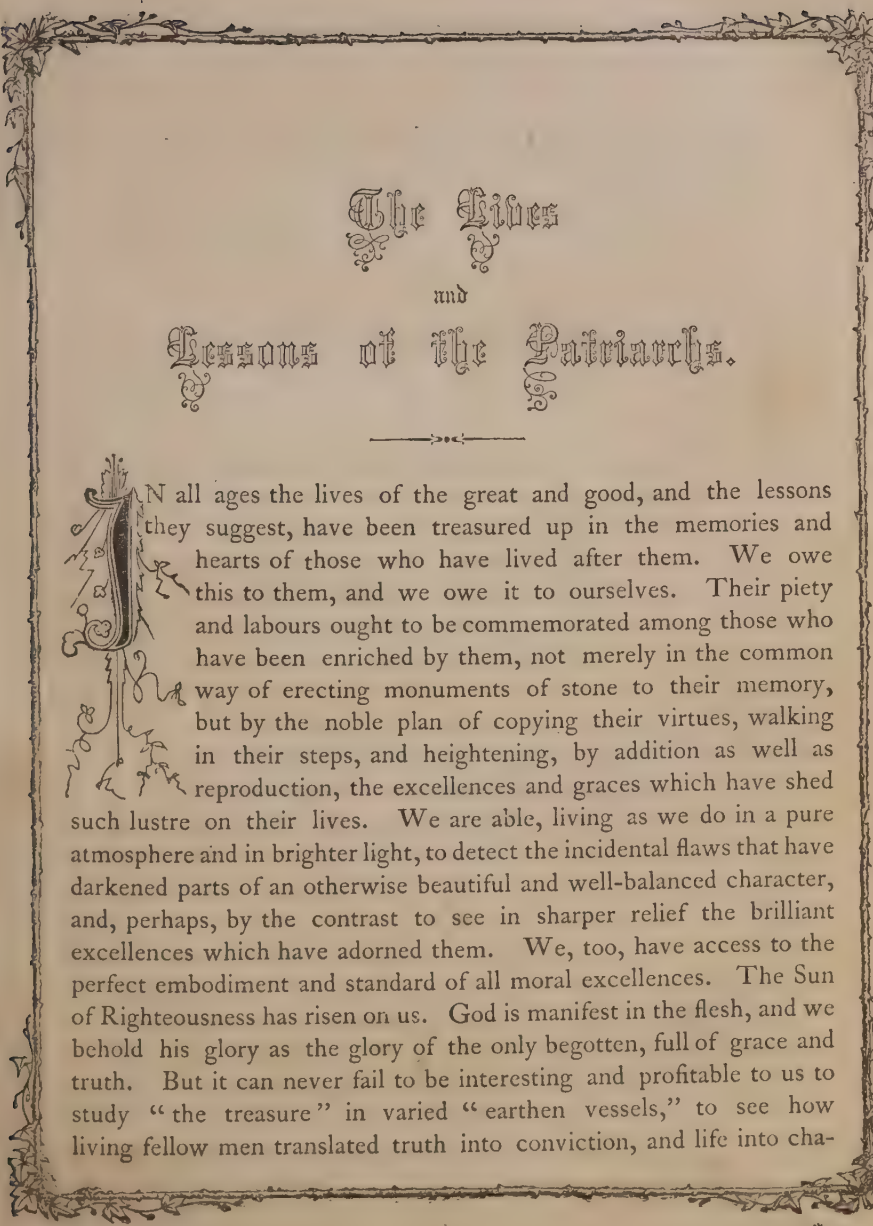
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The Garden of Eden.



The Lives and Lessons of the Patriarchs.

IN all ages the lives of the great and good, and the lessons they suggest, have been treasured up in the memories and hearts of those who have lived after them. We owe this to them, and we owe it to ourselves. Their piety and labours ought to be commemorated among those who have been enriched by them, not merely in the common way of erecting monuments of stone to their memory, but by the noble plan of copying their virtues, walking in their steps, and heightening, by addition as well as reproduction, the excellences and graces which have shed such lustre on their lives. We are able, living as we do in a pure atmosphere and in brighter light, to detect the incidental flaws that have darkened parts of an otherwise beautiful and well-balanced character, and, perhaps, by the contrast to see in sharper relief the brilliant excellences which have adorned them. We, too, have access to the perfect embodiment and standard of all moral excellences. The Sun of Righteousness has risen on us. God is manifest in the flesh, and we behold his glory as the glory of the only begotten, full of grace and truth. But it can never fail to be interesting and profitable to us to study "the treasure" in varied "earthen vessels," to see how living fellow men translated truth into conviction, and life into cha-

racter, to mark where they fell, and whence again they derived the secret of their victory and final success.

They still shed light like lamps along the corridors of time. Being dead they speak, and their words reverberate along the aisles. Their footprints are luminous on the sands of time. We do not now hear their footfalls as their cotemporaries heard them, but their words grow more distinct as the years accumulate. We do not see them now as of old, the patriarch in his tent, the priest by his altar, the pilgrim in the desert, the weary sleeper on his pillow of stone, the prophet in his chamber, the king on his throne, the shepherd among his flock. But they live and act on the ages notwithstanding. Their voices have all the freshness of their first utterance. Their life is not extinct, but rather they more intensely live. The lives of the Pharaohs, whose deeds so many love to decipher on slabs of granite and limestone ; the lives of the Cæsars who shaped and sustained, and adorned and debased Imperial Rome, are not to be compared with these in the interest they excite, in the practical usefulness they impart, or in the force with which they act in the affairs and affections and admiration of mankind.

What an interesting study is the life of Adam and Eve ! How sad, and yet solemn is the biography of the protomartyr Abel ! How beautiful and suggestive the life of Enoch, who walked with God, of whom least is said, by whom most is suggested ! How full of dramatic interest the story of Noah, and his sons ! How rich in detail, how full of pathos, how instructive in example, how invigorating to faith is the life of Abraham, the father of the faithful ! How pregnant with instructive episodes is the history of Isaac and Jacob ! What sensational novel can match the beautiful but real story of Joseph and his brethren ? What a space does Moses occupy in the annals of the world, in the pages of ecclesiastical history, in the successive stages of redemption, in the veneration of the Jew, in the theology of the Gentile ! How sublime are the acts ; how exalted

the character of Elijah and Elisha, those stern prophets of a degenerate court and a decadent age ! How grand the reign, and pomp, and glory of Solomon ! How chequered its moral history ; how deep the fall ; how encouraging the restoration of David, the son of Jesse ! His life is an impressive lesson ; his death a euthanasia. Christ is the centre jewel, the Bible is the setting, and the patriarchs are the surrounding diamonds—some flawed, but all shining in the light and lustre of their common Lord. We want to know on earth a little more of those men who will be our companions in heaven. Dead they yet speak. Gone up higher they still let fall lights and reminiscences the Church cannot afford to lose, and the devout will not let go. Separated from us by ages, they are united to us by common sympathies, and sufferings, and sorrows, and struggles, and victories. They were the spring flowers of the Christian year. We are its summer blossoms. They and we the offspring of the same earth, ripened in the rays of the same sun, and refreshed by the showers of the same skies, shall be gathered together at the same harvest home.

“ O garden of the Lord ! whose seeds dropped down from heaven, and to whom angels bear watering dews night by night ! O flowers and plants of righteousness ! O sweet and holy fruits ! we walk among you, and gaze with loving eyes, and rest under your odorous shadows ; nor will we, with sacrilegious hand, tear you, that we may search the secret of your roots, nor spoil you, that we may know how such wondrous grace and goodness are evolved within you ! ”

“ Lives of good men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime ;
And departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.

“ Footprints that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing may take heart again.

“ Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate,
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.”

Adam and Eve.

IN INNOCENCE.



AFTER our earth had been thoroughly and beautifully furnished and fitted for the new dynasty or family for whose use it was meant, God crowned his creative power, wisdom, and love by forming man, his body from the dust beneath his feet; his soul from the breath of heaven. Man was not a development of an inferior species belonging to another genus, as certain sceptical sciologists allege; he was and is the only species of the genus Man. He was created in his highest perfection—in his soul the image of the God that made him; in his body the type of the Messiah that was to be—the last and noblest creature of creation's birth-week. However beautiful the heavens and the earth were—however rich in instruction and radiant with light, there was a want till there was found an eye that could see their beauties, and an ear that could hear their harmonies, and a mind that could appreciate all their glory. There was, indeed, the temple, but as yet there was no priest to minister by its altar, no Levite to serve in its chambers. Man therefore appears the perfect inhabitant of a perfect world. To him every sight was beauty, every sound music, and every sensation bliss.

Free in all he thought, or felt, or did, he stood the representa-

tive father of countless generations ; in him to stand or in him to fall.

God then declared of perfect man what is no less true of his imperfect sons : " It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helpmeet for him." " And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept, and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh instead thereof, and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made He a woman, and brought her unto the man, and Adam said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh." Adam was the *ISH*, or man, and his wife was *ISHA*, or woman.

This divine institution clearly proves that the social state is man's proper and most useful condition, and therefore that the monastic or ascetic and insulated life is alike unnatural and injurious. In his personal solitude man degenerates to the savage ; in society and in his home, with wife and children, he attains his highest earthly degree. Marriage has a divine foundation, its origin is in Deity ; God was the first celebrant of the holy rite, and the first institution still survives the fall. It was not created but reconstituted or rebaptized by Christ when, on one occasion, he quoted the very words of God, indicating at once the inspiration of Moses, and the lasting expediency and propriety of that ordinance which has been so long a blessing on earth. Marriage is not a mere civil contract. It is a civil contract so far as the law of the land must be the basis of it for all civil purposes ; but it is more than this ; it is a divine institution, a sacred tie, all but a sacramental rite.

It is this divine and religious sanction that imparts to the wife her peculiar and rightful dignity, place, and relationship. In some countries the wife is regarded merely as an elegant and sensuous toy ; in others she is treated practically as a mere domestic servant.

Among Hindoos she is degraded to the lowest possible level on which so beautiful a fragment of our purest humanity can be laid. In Christian, and primarily in Protestant lands, she is regarded as the companion; the ornament or glory of man.

It is very evident that polygamy or plurality of wives has no sanction from God. It is said, "He shall cleave unto his wife (not wives); and they shall be one flesh." Indeed, nature itself testifies against any infraction of this Divine ordinance, for wherever polygamy prevails, as in Mahometan countries, the human race steadily degenerates, and all that elevates and adorns social life withers down to its roots. A conclusive proof that polygamy is contrary to nature is the fact of the nearly numerical equality of the sexes.

If marriage was good for man in paradise, that is, in a state of holiness, and purity, and innocence, it must still tend to mitigate the sufferings he has drawn down by his sin since the fall. Inspiration alone decides the question, "Marriage is honourable in all."

Eve was taken from Adam's side while he was thrown into a deep slumber. During this operation he slept sweetly. "So He giveth his beloved sleep." The chasm left in his side was more than compensated by so rich an accession to the happiness and comfort and joy of his heart.

It was from Jesus on the cross, and from his side pierced by the soldier's spear, that his church sprung forth, having there her holy birthplace, and from that hour the beginning of her most glorious career. Nor will she cease to triumph until He presents her to Himself, "a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish, or any such thing." "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Where Eden the scene of this happy wedding and the home of the happy pair was situated, we shall never be able perfectly to determine. The Noachian Deluge has greatly altered the whole geographical aspect of the earth. All the traces and remains of that beautiful spot are swept away. The account by Moses was written upwards of two thousand years after the occurrence of the facts recorded. Moses alludes, in his narrative, to what was its geography while he was writing, and therefore he states of the name of the first river called Pison—"that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold;" hereby describing what existed in his own days, when he, an historian, was writing, and what existed in Paradise when it was in its full bloom, and beauty, and perfection. It has been thought, however, by Christian geographers, who have turned their attention to the investigation of this subject, that Eden was situated somewhere in the country extending from the Indus, on the east, to the Nile on the west, embracing the fairest part of Asia, and a part of Africa, containing the countries now known as Cabul, Persia, Arabia, Abyssinia, and a portion of Egypt.

But it was the smile of God that gave it its beauty, and the breath of God that communicated its perfume. It would have overspread the whole area of the earth, and become the unchangeable condition of a happy race, if man had not fallen from his allegiance to God, and thereby from the table-land of happiness on which he was originally placed.

It is worthy of notice that even in a state of innocence the Sabbath was instituted and bestowed as a privilege and enjoyment on man. This proves it is not a Levitical ceremony. It is coeval with man. God set apart and solemnly consecrated one day in seven as soon as He rested from creation work, and gave it to man not as a penance to be endured, or a burden to be borne, but as an addition to his joys, that sweetened not diminished them. Needful

then, it is more needful now. The change of the day was not the repeal or change of the institution. The light was not extinguished, but merely transferred from one candlestick to another. "The Lord of the Sabbath" lifted the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day, and the transference is evidence not of its extinction, but of its perpetuity as a privilege in this economy. The Sabbath, like all creation, is not what it was; man's sin clouds and man's passions disturb it. But we are told in Hebrews iv. 9, that "there remaineth a rest for the people of God." The word translated rest is *σαββατισμος*, literally, a Sabbath-keeping for the people of God. On that day the air, the ocean, and the earth, the soul and body of man, will enjoy everlasting rest, and yet rest which shall be full of service: "they rest not day and night."

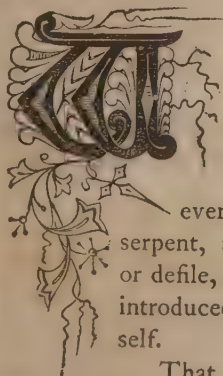
Even in Eden man was not idle. He had his mission and his work there. Indolence is good for neither mind nor body. It is not work that injures man but worry.

Such was man before sin entered, and death by sin. Such and yet nobler and more resplendent with spiritual and material beauty will he be when sin and death have been expelled from creation, and a brighter and more beautiful day has broken on this weary and weeping earth of ours.



Adam and Eve.

THE STORY OF THE FALL.



As we pass from sunshine to shadow, the glory wanes, and the gloom becomes deep and wide over all the earth. The serpent was a reptile demoniacally possessed. Satan retaining the archangel's power and wisdom, inspired however by the fiend's depravity, took possession of the serpent, and through that medium resolved to dislodge, or defile, or utterly destroy the new tenants who had been introduced into the world—a world he wanted for himself.

That the serpent did not speak of himself in the exercise of any original endowment, or in virtue of an intelligence with which he was originally invested, is clear from the fact that his speech indicated thought, subtlety, and logic, combined with wickedness, which can only be accounted for by the hypothesis that Satan—the archangel fallen—had taken possession of the serpent, because the most subtle in itself, the most fit for his purpose, and the most likely to deceive Eve. She had already seen that the serpent was the most subtle and gifted of the brutes of the field. Satan accordingly seized and made this reptile the vehicle of his assault upon our first parents, and succeeded, by this device, in seducing them from their

allegiance to God. The serpent first approached the woman. She was then, as now, not the weakest in intellect, but the most susceptible of impression, and in her innocence perhaps the least suspicious of the approach of evil; and therefore most likely, before a bold and subtle assault, to be carried away. If he had approached Adam, there would have been needed much stronger reasoning, and less appeal to the tenderness and supposed mercy of God, which so skilfully characterized the subtle and seductive logic that he employed. "Yea, hath God said?" Are you quite sure of this? Are you sure also, if God did say, "Ye shall surely die," that you are putting the right meaning upon it? He created doubts about the historical accuracy of the words, and difficulties about their interpretation. How subtle! how fitted to throw Eve off her guard, and while off her guard, to become his victim! The woman, instead of answering the serpent as she did, ought to have said what the Bruiser of his head said afterwards, "Get thee behind me, Satan. It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." She did not yield to her first, and in morals the ever safe, impression. When we are about to take a step in politics or in science, we ought to think twice before we act; but in moral things, the first aspect of the subject is generally the true one. Eve, disastrously for her issue, instead of resisting Satan, when he would have fled from her, held communion with him. "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden." She had no business to tell him so. He had no right to require such information, and she had no commission to give it. "But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." This appeal to the word of God was admirable. Had she clung to this with her whole heart, she would have gained the day. Yet she did not here quote God's words fully as she ought to have done. She lost or left out part of the penalty in her repetition of it. God's sentence was, "Thou shalt surely die" (*moth tamoth*), "Dying



The Expulsion from Eden.

thou shalt die ;” that is, “Thou shalt surely, terribly, disastrously die.” But she gave, “Lest ye die.” Thus she let go a vital fragment of the Divine Word, and so let go an element of strength, persistency, and triumph. The serpent said, after he had so far influenced her, “Ye shall not surely die.” He saw that he was listened to, and had a not reluctant ear ; that he was not at least repelled ; and that the pure and only successful process of “resisting and he shall flee” was not adopted. Having carried the outside fortification, he now approached nearer and closer, and assailed her still more vigorously. The serpent said, “Ye shall not surely die.” This was a daring assault on the word of God. All error in doctrine and evil in life begins here—that is, in the mutilation or misinterpretation of the sacred Scriptures. “You may find a very different issue, something good not evil, may happen to you ; but, at all events, you shall not surely die.” Thus assuming to be a messenger from heaven, he gave a new version of the message of God. Satan is still transformed into an angel of light. “Ye shall not surely die : for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened.” Here he explains death to mean life, and light, and enjoyment. Instead of a calamity overtaking you, “ye shall be as gods,” or “God ;” for *Elohim* (God) is generally used in the plural number (gods) ; and therefore, “as gods,” should be translated, “as God Himself ;” that is, you may take a step in that upward and glorious progression which is the destiny of an immortal being, and instead of sinking as you fancy, you shall be “as God Himself, knowing good and evil.”

The words, “knowing good and evil,” would seem to indicate that Eve had some idea of what evil was, and that therefore evil had existed or broken out as it did among the angels prior to the creation of man. Therefore it may be presumed that she had been in some way informed of this occurrence before. The very penalty, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” implies that

Adam had some idea of what death was ; for how could it be a penalty that they should dread, if they had not some idea of what death really meant ?

“ And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise,” she forgot the prohibition. Her senses carried the day against her principles. Many things taste sweet, which may not be right. Many things look beautiful, and yet may not be lawful. Eve instead of falling back on God’s clear prohibition, “ Thou shalt not,” fixed her mind on the attractions of the object instead of the testimony of God who interdicted, making her senses the arbiters of right and wrong. “ And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise,” thus believing what Satan deceptively taught, and forgetting what God said, “ she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her ; and he did eat.” She had lost all practical recollection of God’s prohibition, and accepted and believed Satan’s lie. She saw that the tree was good for food, and, therefore, reckless of the interdict of God, she ate of it. It was deliberate disobedience and disloyalty to the Almighty. Men do things without thinking whether God has said, “ Thou shalt,” or “ Thou shalt not ;” judging of the morality by the pleasure or sweetness of the thing, forgetting that the blossom which looks most beautiful, and smells most fragrant, often contains beneath the most deadly poison.

Adam took of it also as soon as Eve offered it. It seems remarkable that he did not hesitate. Nothing is said about his doubts or hesitation or objections. No doubt, under her influence and eloquent persuasion, or from the warm attachment that he had to her, he easily capitulated, and fell. Woman’s power is not as ours, muscular or mainly intellectual ; yet she wields a power, more subtle it may be, less seen it may be, but not less surely successful.

Many husbands who think they are the governors, are practically the most thoroughly governed. Perhaps it is well for them that they are so. Adam, without protesting, without one recorded word of doubt, obeyed his wife, and took of the fruit, "and he did eat."

"The eyes of them both were opened," and they discovered what they never thought of, or were ashamed of before, "that they were naked," and they heard God's voice, once so lovely, no longer musical, but startling and altered: "Where art thou?" What has become of you? Adam, ready with an excuse, gave as his apology for hiding himself what he knew before, that he was naked, and therefore had run to hide himself. God, in order to suggest to Adam's conscience that there was something wrong, said, "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" Trouble in every instance has a visible or invisible, but real and operative connection with sin.

Adam's excuse or apology is what we should have expected. It is so exquisitely true to nature, so completely what we feel we should have done in similar circumstances, that we cannot but feel that, if this were not inspired, Moses must have been something more than man. Adam did not penitently say, "O God, I have sinned, I have broken thy law, have mercy upon me;" but selfishly shifting the load from his own shoulders, he said, "The woman thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." This was very cowardly on the part of Adam. It indicated also a terrible degeneracy. He threw the blame off himself, where it justly rested, and wickedly and untenderly laid it on the shoulders of poor Eve; as if she alone were guilty, and he purely innocent. And what seemed designed to increase her load was meant at the same time to dishonour and criminate God. He therefore said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, gave me." Why didst thou give me such a woman? I did not ask her of thee? If thou art angry with

me for eating this, remember "the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, it was she gave me of the tree." And thus he threw the blame partly upon Eve, and partly upon God; but as to himself, he, self-righteous man, felt deeply he deserved no condemnation. Is not this the picture of human nature still? God was mercifully silent here, where censure was so deeply deserved, and might have been so fully dealt, and therefore turned aside and spoke to the woman, and said, "What is this that thou hast done?" Let us mark in her answer how completely the woman was the reflection of the man. "And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." I am wholly innocent, I deserve no censure, and have incurred no blame, I could not help it; it was "the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." I am not to blame, says the young man, it was my position, my habit, my temper, my circumstances, ten thousand things except myself; the fallen character of man indicating that he does not care where the guilt falls if he can throw it off his own shoulders. God bore and forbore, and so far graciously silent still, he turned to the serpent, and said, "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go,"—the very curse indicating indirectly, but really, how the serpent had moved before—"and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This is the first promise of the gospel. It sounded thus along the centuries. We translate the seed, "it;" it should be rendered "HE," afterwards it is rightly translated "his." In the Douay translation it is translated, "She shall bruise thy head;" and there is a foot-note that states, "She, the woman." Now, every person who knows the Hebrew Grammar is aware that the word here used is *Hu*, which must be rendered either he or it. It cannot be rendered she. It must be masculine here, and it ought to be translated "he." And if we take the Sep-

tuagint version, which was made nearly three hundred years before the birth of Christ, and therefore irrespective of any subsequent or present controversy, we shall find the word rendered into Greek *αὐτός*, that is, in the masculine gender, "he shall bruise thy head." So early was the gospel preached. We do not know whether it be any part of that enmity, but the reptile which the human race thoroughly and universally loathes, is the serpent. It is a universal feeling. Whether it arise from the peculiar structure of the reptile, or from a traditional recollection, having its birth in the inspired record of Moses, I know not, but the fact is as I have stated it. "That old serpent" is the Scripture name of the devil.

The curse is next pronounced upon Adam and Eve. "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Woman still bears witness to her participation of the curse. Had it never alighted on her, she had never endured the greatest of all pains. Yet first in the story of redeeming love as first in the fall, she rises again toward equality with her husband, and to superiority over her personal sufferings, where Christian truth sheds on her head and heart its noblest and purest influences. Poor man also still earns bread with hand or head, and in either case with the sweat of his brow. But he too will have his lot in the regeneration.

Adam, it is said, "called his wife's name Eve; because she was

the mother of all living." The ordinary idea of this change of name, is erroneous. Most persons think he called her Eve because she became the mother of the whole human race. But God said before this, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth;" and she would have been the mother of all living, if she had retained her innocence. Such a reason, therefore, does not warrant the change of name from Isha to "Eve." He says, "I will no longer call her *Isha*, i.e., man-ess, a woman, but *Chavah*," "a mother," or "the living one," or "the life." Why was this change? I am convinced that the true explanation of it is found in the fact, that the promise here made was not "to seeds, as of many, but as of one," that is, as of Abraham's, and because of Abraham's also of Eve's.

"God placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." This has been the subject of very great and very protracted inquiry. When we remember that the cherubim placed here play a great part in the subsequent history of the human race, we are led to believe there is more significance than meets the eye in the fact that "He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden." Moses was commanded (in Exodus xxv. 17—20) to make "a mercy seat of pure gold; two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be." Moses was aware of the fact of the cherubim at the gates of Eden when he wrote this, and also of another fact, that God is represented as "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims."

The "mercy seat" may be translated "propitiatory;" and therefore says the apostle, Christ is our propitiatory or mercy seat. The cherubim were placed at the gate in order to teach man, by a foreshadow and a prophecy, the future restoration, when the mercy seat should be erected in the tabernacle, and in the fulness of the times when its antitype Christ should come, the true propitiation, not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world. The cherubim were also placed in the temple in the Holy of Holies, overshadowing the mercy seat, and toward it the Jews worshipped, and there also the glory, or the Shechinah, rested. "Shechinah" is derived from the word *Shakan*, and means to dwell. This passage might be paraphrased, "He placed the Shechinah with the cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden." Peter says: "Which things the angels desire to look into;" that is, just as the cherubim looked down on the mercy seat between them. This may be gathered from the passage in which it is said Cain "went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden." So far it would seem to indicate that the cherubim were to Adam and Eve what the mercy seat with its cherubim were to the Jews, and what Christ in reality, who is everywhere, is to us,—the sign and symbol of an Atonement, a visible pledge that a Saviour would come in the fulness of time, according to prophecy.

The flaming sword was perfectly distinct from the cherubim. The cherubim did not wield a flaming sword in their hands, "he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned every way upon itself," as it should be rendered. The flaming sword was to Adam and Eve the symbol of the Paradise they had lost and could not re-enter, and the cherubim pointed to a paradise that was to be regained through the death and the atonement of the Lamb, into which the redeemed would enter through the blood of the Lamb.

Man in mercy was ejected from Eden. He could no longer

breathe its air. He had lost his crown, and had become a sick and suffering creature. The sanctuary of his heart was defiled; the first paradise was lost in a garden, the second was recovered in the desert. "In Him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "As by one man's disobedience many were constituted sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many"—the vast multitude—"be constituted righteous." His righteousness is our title; his blood is our atonement. And "to him that overcometh," he says, "will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Christ is the way to the heaven we have lost; the restorer of the holiness we let go; and the giver of all. It is impossible for any one, whatever his creed be, to deny that man is in an abnormal condition; that some great deterioration has passed in his nature and his world. The whole creation groans and travails in pain.

The brute creation is not as it once was. God does not say in so many words that death was inflicted on the brute creation in consequence of Adam's sin; but it is obvious that this conclusion may be gathered from allusions scattered throughout the Bible, in which there is implied a curse, and that curse unfolded by death lighting upon all the animal creation. At all events, the curse pronounced upon the serpent seems to involve a curse inflicted upon all the brute creation previously; it is said, "Thou art cursed *above all cattle*, and above every beast of the field." Surely, if the serpent had an aggravated and added curse, it implies that the other animals were partakers of the ordinary curse, and that therefore the whole animal creation came under God's curse at this crisis; what was the nature of that curse is partly explained by its execution at the flood, when the animal creation suffered death in common with guilty men, as is proved by existing facts. The promised reversal of all that sin has done, shows by implication, the extent and nature of the great catastrophe.

“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” If we turn to 1 Corinthians xv. 22, we shall find these expressions : “As in Adam all die,”—that is plainly the death of the body, since he is speaking of its resurrection,—“even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” In the 26th verse, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death,” that is, the death of the body. So in the 54th verse, “When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written,” that is, at the last day, “Death”—he is speaking of the resurrection of the body, and therefore he means physical death—“is swallowed up in victory.”



Adam and Eve.

POPULAR PERPLEXITIES ABOUT THE FALL.



IN these times some divines have appeared who seem to labour and write for one object, to prove that Moses was not inspired ; that the history of creation, Eden, and the fall is a mere drifted tradition, which we must not accept as an historical and reliable record. In the course of this work we shall show from external sources, especially from recent researches in Egypt, that the history of Moses must be regarded by scholars what it is held to be by Christians, an authentic and true history ; the only authentic and true history of a period so remote and yet so intensely interesting too. At present I proceed to show that our present moral and social position is explicable and consistent only on the assumption that the Mosaic History records facts.

Various theories have been adopted in order to reconcile the phenomena extracted from the earth by geology, and the texts we read in the sacred Volume, as recorded by Moses.

Some think man was originally made to die, that death was from the beginning a universal law among creatures, that the tendency of man to die was originally part of his nature, but that as long as he retained his innocence, this tendency was repressed.

“That death, therefore,” says Taylor, “which God threatened



"Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground."

to Adam, and which passed upon his posterity, is not the going out of this world, but the manner of going. If he had stayed in innocence, he should have gone placidly and fairly, without vexations and afflictive circumstances; he should not have died by sickness, defect, misfortune, or unwillingness. But when he fell, then he began to die; the same day God said, and that must needs be true; and, therefore, it must mean upon that very day he fell into an evil and dangerous condition, a state of change and affliction, then death began; that is, man began to die by a natural diminution and aptness to disease and misery. Change or separation of soul and body is but accidental to death; death may be with or without either; but the formality, the curse, and the sting—that is, misery, sorrow, fear, diminution, defect, anguish, dishonour, and whatsoever is miserable and afflictive in nature, that is death.”

These and similar solutions do not, I think, exhaust the words of the inspired writer. Far more natural is the ancient popular interpretation, which concludes that Adam was not originally created to die, and that the true reason of his death, and the death of the animal creation subject to him, and created during the six days, was wholly Adam’s sin. The great fallacy that pervades all these theories is, the unfounded assumption that this world was meant to be no more than a temporary tent for man to dwell in for a season, and that transference to a loftier sphere was his ultimate destiny. The word of Moses seems fairly to teach this earth was meant for Adam’s lasting home and place of abode. God could not have come nearer to him, for we read that He walked in the cool of the evening in the beautiful garden, and conversed and held communion with his creature. I see no hint of the notion of transference as Adam’s destined end. If this world had remained an unfallen world, there would have been no necessity for death. I cannot therefore discover that this theory fairly satisfies the Scriptural record, or is warranted by, and in accordance with, the various passages of Scripture, which

allude to this subject, and seem to me to establish the common belief, that all nature fell the instant that Adam fell.

It does naturally appear that the animal creation was involved in man's ruin. "Al! creation," says St. Paul, "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," and its "earnest expectation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God," their restoration being its recovery.

In the judgment pronounced on man, the brute creation participated. If animals, whenever man sins, are still found involved in the consequences, we may discover that what takes place in special modern cases under the providence of God, is but the unspent consequence of what took place on a larger scale, when man sinned, and all the brute creation shared in his ruin. We see the range of the primal curse, in its sweeping the ground of its richest beauty, depriving the air, as chemists have supposed, of some of its most vital and precious constituent elements, making the earth, which once burst into roses when Eve looked upon it, now bear only thistles, and briers, and thorns. The very fact that the earth thus suffered under man's sin involved the suffering of the brutes which lived upon that earth, and were dependent upon it for their nutrition and their food.

But here the objection comes to be made, how can we explain the fact which geologists adduce, that death did exist as an experience prior to the creation of Adam? The geologist naturally remarks, you assert that death is the consequence of sin; but our discoveries in the subterranean caves and fossiliferous strata of the earth show, written on records perfectly intelligible, that death and destruction existed in the animal creation a very long period prior to the introduction of Adam's sin, and therefore death is not the consequence and issue of Adam's fall.

I observe in reply to this, that geology does not show death to have occurred in a single instance amongst the animals created

during the first six days of creation. All the animals that perished in those enormous masses seem to have belonged to a different climate, to a different condition of the globe, and to have been all of a more ancient period than those created during the six days before the crowning act of man's creation.

We know from the sacred records that sin occurred in the prehistoric era; that is, long before the creation of man. Angels sinned. May not their sin have struck every creature existing in their era, and contemporary with them, and so have inflicted death on all connected with that dynasty? This assumes what the record almost implies, that angels originally dwelt on earth. This is a highly probable fact. If so, who knows the height and depth and extent to which this sin of theirs may have gone? What havoc it may have brought upon creation all around them, how high toward heaven it may have reached, how deep toward earth's centre it may have shot? Those subterranean traces of ruin, of disorganization, and of death, may be the issues of angels' sin long prior to Adam's creation, while the wrecks and death that we see now are proofs of only the transference, not of the first application, of a sentence, executed millions of years before, to a new dynasty introduced in new circumstances, and of which Adam was the federal head, who sinned and brought upon his race what angels brought upon theirs,—death, with all its bitterness and woe. If so, the sentence of death pronounced upon Adam on his fall was not the creation of a new law, but the application of an old one; not the occurrence of a first fact, but the repetition of a long prior existent fact.

This would explain how Adam and Eve knew what was meant by dying before they had sinned, and how also they knew what evil was while they were only personally conscious of good. We may therefore conclude that the execution of the sentence, "In the day thou sinnest thou shalt die," was not the creation of a new penalty that never had been previously attached to sin, but only the de-

claration of an old one in the case of a new dynasty ; not the occurrence of a new fact that never had transpired in the antecedent history of the universe, but the repetition of a fact that had previously occurred. This is perfectly consistent with the whole analogy of the Word of God.

It is very difficult to believe that man was originally made to die ; there is nothing in the physical constitution of his body that indicates this as a primal law. On the contrary, eminent medical men and physiologists have said, that if a stranger could come from another orb and examine the human body in full life, he would pronounce it the embodiment of a perpetual motion ; and that its machinery, unless shattered by violence, must go on for ever. There is no ultimate physical reason in the world, why, when man comes to fifty or sixty years of age, the crows' feet, as they are called, should appear at each eye, and whiteness glisten on his hair, and infirmity, weakness, feebleness, decay, begin to seize every limb. Such a change must be explained on other grounds than those of original physical organization ; it is only to be solved by the judicial sentence, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Disease and decay are incipient death.

Every death on sick beds, in hospitals, in huts, in palaces, and in battle-fields points back to the primal curse, and thereby attests the veracity—the literal historical veracity—of the Word of God.

The curse pronounced on man as dependent on the soil for food, is visible in the nineteenth century. "In the sweat of his brow," or his brain, in tears and toil, he sows and reaps, and anxiously waits for the fruits of the earth.

The degeneracy of the fruitfulness of the earth and this excessive toil of man necessitated by its deterioration, refer back to, and are fairly solved only by recognizing the historical truth of the Mosaic narrative. There is another curse which witnesses to-day to the facts of Genesis. "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy con-

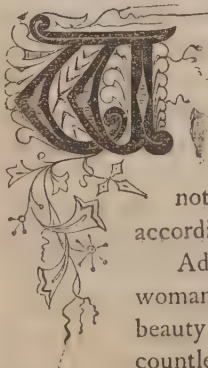
ception ; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." We need no comment upon these words. They have their echoes in the experience of suffering womanhood. Every mother is my witness, and therefore a witness that the original sentence recorded in Genesis was the decree of Him who is Lord and Ruler of all. "And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." Where Christianity is unknown, there the lordship of the husband hardens into tyranny ; and only in proportion as a restorative religion, that is, Christianity is felt, does the lordship of the husband soften into love. We can have no stronger proof of the fulfilment of this curse, for such it was, than in China, in Hindostan, in Turkey. Nor can we have clearer evidence that the curse has been so far averted and reversed in Christian countries, where woman is raised to her proper platform, and made the companion, the friend, and the helpmeet for man, not his drudge, his servant, or his plaything.

The Judge of all the earth inflicted the curse. The Redeemer of all that believes mitigates and subdues, and where his gospel is fully accepted neutralizes the curse.

The very traditions that float over pagan nations point back to the main incidents recorded in Genesis. How comes it to pass that the division of time into weeks of seven days exists in almost every nation on earth, however ignorant it may be of the Mosaic Record ; that where, as in France, it was proposed to have decades of ten days each instead of weeks, the institution perished soon after its birth ? Something in the inner consciousness of humanity leads it to accept the Scripture constitution.



Mercy in Wrath.



WE shall find, by carefully tracing the best, because an inspired, ecclesiastical history, that from Paradise lost, onward to the very verge of Paradise regained, the record of God's ceaseless dealing with his people has been, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

Adam and Eve, in the full perfection of manhood and womanhood, placed in the midst of scenes of unrivalled beauty and magnificence ; representative man, with countless generations to remain or fall, and fall, it might be, for ever, according as he stood or fell ; placed in circumstances where all was blessedness, and peace, and joy ; all sounds harmony, all sights beauty, all sensations bliss ; clearly understanding what duty was, and clearly comprehending what the issues of its infraction were ; with the least possible temptation to sin, with the greatest possible inducement to be steadfast in his allegiance : yet, in the face of all, with scarcely an element against him except his own free and sovereign will, he sinned, broke the law, and fell. Why did God enact such a law ? Why so gratuitous an arrangement ? It was of the very essence of a creature's condition that some such arrangement should be made. There is no evidence that the tree of

knowledge of good and evil was poisonous or morally destructive, or that his eating of it necessitated death by a poison acting on the physical organization. Where, then, lay the stress of the prohibition? Where and in what was involved the peril of contravening that prohibition? Man was made a creature, dependent upon God as Creator. It was essential that he should always feel that he was a creature, owing fealty, loyalty, and allegiance to God; and that he should always be reminded it was his duty to express that allegiance by some mark—outward worship, or form, or ceremony. God, therefore, in order to let man ever feel that he was a creature, said, “I plant this tree; now, over the illimitable area of this beautiful Paradise, without a withered leaf, a stain, or anything that can hurt or destroy, you may eat of every tree, the choicest and the sweetest, whose leaves wave in that exhilarating air, whose fruit has ripened in that beautiful sun, of any one of them, or of all of them; but of this tree, which has no special temptation by its superior fruit, you may not eat; for in the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die.” God selected this plan of letting Adam know that he was a creature, that he was under law, and that as a subject and a creature he was to render in this way obedience, and allegiance, and worship, to his God. God might have appointed another way; the virtue, or the vice, was not in the tree. He might have said to Adam, “You may drink of every river in Paradise except this one; or you may drink of every spring that wells up from the depths of the earth refreshing and cool waters; but you must not drink of this one; or, you may walk on every path of Paradise, but on this little path you must not walk; or, you may gather every violet that scents the air, or every rose that greets the sunshine; but you must not touch that particular flower. It was not anything in the tree that made it alone suitable; it was simply the test of allegiance, the evidence of creatureship and obedience on the part of man to the God that made and crowned him. The least possible temptation surely was given to Adam and

Eve to eat of that tree. I have no doubt there was much sweeter fruit elsewhere. What could tempt them to eat of that tree? The greatness of a crime very much lies in the smallness of the temptation. The temptation to Adam and Eve to eat of this tree was slight, and the issues contingent on their doing so were so vast, so fearful, that one marvels that Eve and Adam could be tempted to brave them, and eat of the forbidden tree, and bring death into the world and all our woe.

The sentence that should have been justly fulminated on them is in these words: "In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die;" that is, literally, "thou shalt, dying, die," in a sense and of a degree of which you can have but imperfect conception. In fact, the words are so strong, that they seem to express, "You shall die physically, you shall die morally, you shall die eternally; dying, thou shalt die the death." Did God inflict this sentence? No. On Paradise lost, on the grave in which Adam and Eve sleep till the resurrection morn, beneath the shadow of the gates of Eden, there might have been written the words, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." If He had done so, what would have been the effect? The instant they ate, that instant the heart would have ceased its beat; the guilty pair would have been laid in a common grave; the footfall of no descendants would ever have been heard; and this orb would have been the one blasted orb in the universe, the great sepulchre of creation, in which lay two dead yet responsible beings, with the winds and the waves singing their everlasting requiem, and the sentence, the terrible sentence, executed in all its extent: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." But God did not do so. He did not deal with them after their sins, nor reward them according to their iniquities. But, if He spared them, surely, surely He must have utterly blasted the earth on which they were now to live. Not so; He stayed his rough wind in the day of his east wind; He intermingled

sun streaks with the darkening shadows that crept like birds of evil omen from beneath the horizon over the length and breadth of the earth. He interwove the gloom of guilt with the glory of redeeming love. He left upon the earth many a beautiful flower, to tell Adam what he had lost, and to be a prophet to him of what another in his nature would recover and regain. He awoke in the hearts of Adam and Eve love, hope, confidence, and peace, gave them a home on the earth, and hopes beyond, and seed-time, and harvest, and sunshine, and showers.

If we remember what the curse involved—this earth blasted, utterly dismantled, the one grave amid the orbs of the universe—we shall see how much is left, in mercy and goodness. Let us take man as we find him, guilty, having incurred the curse, deserving to die, morally, materially, eternally. What countless joys, like swallows, may be found still about the lowliest roof-tree! God might have made the eye a mere sentinel to watch when danger comes, and by an instinctive act which we are unconscious of to close the instant that the smallest molecule of matter approaches that might injure it; but He might have added nothing more. Instead of that, He has made the eye a perfect picture gallery; not simply a sentinel to warn of approaching danger, but a receptive tablet of beauty. There is no picture gallery like the retina of the human eye. We look upon a beautiful landscape, and that landscape is painted on the retina of the eye with instantaneous force. That nobleman may put all those acres in his title-deeds, that gentleman may have all that land in his possession, but all the princes and nobles of England together cannot put the landscape in their pocket or title-deeds. The gipsy woman by the hedge can see the landscape just as well as duke, or marquis, or lord. God has given to the men of property the earth, the trees, the stones; but the choicest part of it, the landscape, He has given to the poor gipsy or the ragged beggar on the highway. What is all this? A lingering memorial

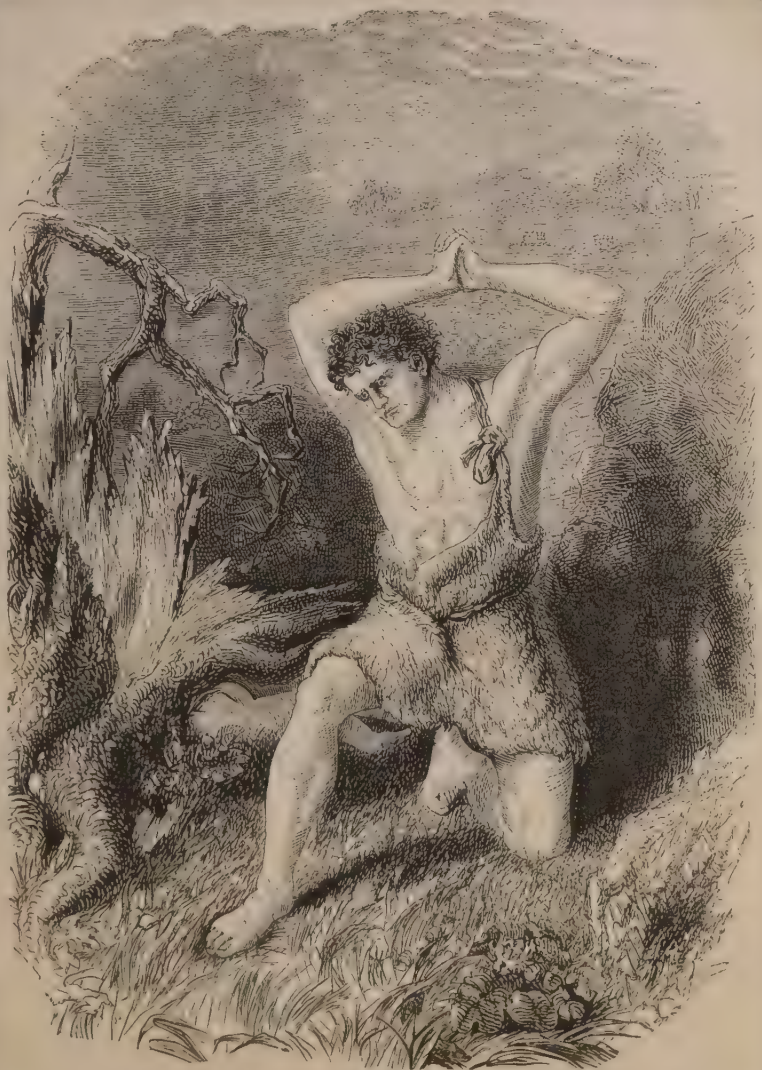
of what was, and an evidence, small it may be, but not to be despised, that God hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

Study the human ear. The ear might have been made simply, like the eye, a sentinel to warn of the footfall of peril, and it would have been a most valuable provision in that capacity. But God has done more than this. As the eye is a perfect picture gallery, the ear is a perfect oratorio. Your ear can drink in all the sweet sounds and feel the immense joy that the highest music imparts to those who have the opportunity of hearing it. Here is not only usefulness, but also pleasure superadded, showing that while God in his justice has inflicted much, in his loving-kindness He has spared much more.

God has made it law, that you must eat food in order to be nourished, and to maintain your strength, and to have the thews and sinews of your body kept strong; but this necessity He might have accompanied with no enjoyment. But food is not only necessary for our maintenance, but it imparts a relish, so that food can be enjoyed in being eaten, thus adding pleasure to necessity. God, in the day of his east wind, has restrained and withheld his rough wind.

There is also the refreshment of moderate toil, and the sweet repose that follows even excessive toil. The labouring peasant's sleep at night is sweeter than the sleep of half the aristocracy of England. He has given us the happiness of home, and fireside lights, the rich pleasure of ministering to the wants and sorrows of others, till beneficence comes to be the choicest luxury. He has left us the pleasures of memory, and the anticipations of hope; the interest, the intense interest of books; the joy of social intercourse; all these lingering rays of Paradise that was, which God would not extinguish as we deserved, and forethrown rays of Paradise that is to be, that comes nearer and nearer every day.

As the curse was deserved by man, it was denounced on the



"And Cain said, My punishment is greater than I can bear."—GEN. iv. 13.

earth on which we live. Now, if the full sweep of the curse had fallen upon this earth, it would have been a blighted, blasted, ugly orb. But evidently it is not so. Then what does that show us? That God did not execute the full sentence. Some of the effects of sin have been made to contribute to the beauty and the attractions of the earth. The upheaval of the everlasting hills, the subsidence of great plains, the cloven rocks, the torn and sharp precipices, and streams, and corries—all these constitute so much beauty, that travellers from the ends of the earth come to look and to admire; showing us that God has not only not executed the full curse, but that He has evoked from the consequences of the curse elements of delight and enjoyment to man, whose crime brought an augmented curse into the world. Or as a trace of God's lingering loving-kindness, wherever we find a ruin, or a bleak, bare, desolate rock or soil, we find numbers of beautiful creeping plants begin to cover up the ruin, as if resolved that the deformity shall be hid, or to cover up the bleak and denuded rock, that its ugliness may not displease; as if a loving God lingered in the secret places of creation, in order to convince man, by a thousand little but beautiful attentions, that "He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

The seasons, too, remain. Spring comes every year, as miraculous as the blossoming of Aaron's rod, upon the earth, and begins to work it upwards into Paradise. The summer follows after the footfall of spring, clothes the earth with blossom; the valleys are covered with corn, the little hills rejoice on every side, and the earth is so beautiful, that it almost looks as if Paradise had returned to it again. Autumn comes, amidst the ripe corn, amidst the golden fields, seed-time and harvest still lasting. Spring is exhilarating, summer is beautiful; but in autumn, when nature sits amid her golden sheaves, like a mother amid her children at her fireside, rejoicing and praising God, who can fail to see in all these seasons,

spared to us still, that "God hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

What rich provisions have been made anticipatory for man ! The coal that keeps out the cold of winter has been stored hundreds of thousands of years ago in the earth's subterranean cellars. The Gulf Stream, from the Gulf of Mexico, pours its warm tide into the Arctic Sea, and because of that Gulf Stream the Mersey and the Clyde are navigable for more than six months in the year. Then the rains are drifted from distant oceans to refresh the flowers ; the sunbeams travel myriads of miles in order to warm every beautiful blossom ; the fountains and springs of the earth act as reservoirs to feed the rivers that form the highways of the world : and if the earth be not Eden, it is not Pandemonium ; it is Eden under a mist, waiting in hope for that blessed day when the mist shall be lifted, and the sunshine return, and its deserts shall rejoice, and its solitary places blossom like the rose, and the world shall be crowned with a Paradise more beautiful than that with which it commenced.

Affliction, while a consequence of the fall, is not unmitigated evil. Even afflictions do good to man. As the dew on the soil, so afflictions saturate the heart, and make it more humble and more fruitful. Wherever in creation you can trace a line of suffering, if you will only look well, you will find, running parallel with it, a line of glory. Even sickness thins the walls to let in more of the celestial glory to the immortal inhabitant within ; and bereavement opens a door in heaven by which your loved one enters, that your heart may follow, and long for the rest that remaineth for the people of God. Our Father still speaks to us in the murmuring brook and in the resounding sea ; in the whispering leaves and in the rejoicing grain ; in the low-voiced wood and in the reverberating thunder ; in the hum of bees, in the song of birds ; in a thousand countless little kindnesses God our Father tells us, "I have not dealt with you after your sins ; I have not rewarded you according to your iniquities."

God loved Adam after he fell just as intensely as He loved Adam before he fell. He so loved Adam before he fell, that He clothed the heavens with glory, the earth with verdure, with blossom, and with beauty ; He so loved Adam after he fell, that He gave—stupendous gift !—his only-begotten Son, “ that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” Why has He not dealt with us after our sins ? Why has He not visited us according to our iniquities ? The answer is found in this—Jesus Christ took our deservings on Him, and God dealt with Him after our sins, and rewarded Him according to our iniquities. Jesus has bequeathed to us sinners his righteousness, and God will deal with us according to that righteousness, and reward us according to his merit. My sins on Him made Him the greatest sufferer in the universe of God ; his righteousness on me will lift me to a throne which Adam in innocence never could have obtained, and crown me with a glory which he never would have been crowned with, and will introduce me into an ocean of blessedness and of joy, so rich, so lasting, so full, as to be unspeakable and full of glory.



Abel.

HE biography of Abel is very short but very instructive. Eve on the birth of Cain felt more than the joy young mothers usually feel. She thought that God's gracious promise of a Redeemer was then fulfilled, and that her firstborn would bruise the serpent's head, recall the departed glory, restore lost Eden, and end the sorrows which sin had introduced. The Hebrew words uttered by Eve on the birth of her first born are in English letters Kanithi Ish eth Yehovah, which literally translated are, "I have gotten a man, the Jehovah." These words so misapplied, indicate how deep an impression the prophecy of the "Woman's Seed," or Messiah, had made on the heart of Eve, and how intensely she longed for his appearing. The name Cain is derived from the verb Kanithi, "I have gotten."

There is no reason in the world why she should have so distinguished Cain, except from the mistaken idea that Cain was the promised seed, of whom it was predicted in Eden, that the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head. Eve thought that she was that woman, and that Cain was that promised son, and that now she would be reinstated in her lost inheritance, replaced in Paradise, and be happy once again. And therefore, she said, as it might be translated, "I have gotten the man Jehovah," a perfectly correct

and just translation, and evidently allusive to the promise of the Messiah, whom she expected.

This the first disappointment that fell on a mother's heart is not yet the last.

When Abel was born, she called him "frailty and vanity." She did not look upon him as so precious and important a gift from God. She regarded Cain as in all probability the promised Messiah, but Abel as "frailty," or "vanity," a child with no grand destiny in reversion. How bitterly mistaken was poor Eve! Cain instead of being the predicted deliverer from sin and death, became in fact the first murderer; and Abel, instead of being the worthless thing that she rashly supposed, proved to be the first holy and faithful martyr. Many a mother thinks she has given birth to an Abel, when she has received a Cain; and some fear it is a Cain, when it turns out to be an Abel. The ultimate result depends, perhaps, less upon anything in the original character of a child, and more upon subsequent training. Whilst grace has its supreme and all-important part in the lasting formation of Christian character, it remains yet practically true,—“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” Cain and Abel were born with hearts equally wicked. Both equally needed the regeneration of God's Holy Spirit. One lived and died without it, the other received and lived under it, and finally entered into the joy for which the Holy Spirit prepared him.

Cain and Abel grew up to manhood. Both had to earn bread by the sweat of their brows. Cain was a farmer and Abel a shepherd—occupations healthy and interesting. Both had been accustomed from childhood to religious privileges and duties. Worship by sacrifice was then habit. One day Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, and Abel of the firstlings of his flock to the altar of God. Both the brothers felt and acknowledged that it was dutiful and right to give worship unto God. Both, too, seem to have be-

lieved and acknowledged that there was but one true and living God, and that to Him alone they ought to give worship. Idolatry in any of its forms was yet unknown. So far both coincided; but it is clear from what subsequently transpired, that one worshipped the true God in a way that was not acceptable because not instituted, and that the other worshipped the same true God in a way that was acceptable because enjoined. Wherein lay the cause of the difference of the result? What made the one to be so graciously accepted, and the other to be so summarily rejected? The first reason lay, doubtless, in the offerers themselves. Cain had become unholy, ungodly, and unrighteous; Abel was a holy, a good, and a righteous man. It is not the offering that makes the offerer accepted; it is the offerer who is accepted first, and the offering that is accepted next. But there was also in the nature and meaning of the two offerings a very great and indeed essential difference. The offering of the one consisted of the sacrifice of a living animal, the shedding of its blood, and the burning it upon the altar as an oblation to God. The sacrifice of the other—if such it might be called—was a garland of flowers, or a basket of sweet and fragrant fruit. One would say, that is, if ignorant of the result, Cain's offering must certainly have been accepted; for what, to all appearance, can be more acceptable than offering this bouquet of beautiful flowers, and this basket of fair and fragrant fruit, and devoting them to God, and with them lifting up a hymn of adoration, "O Lord! I give Thee these. Thy smile has given every tint to every blossom; Thy breath has given its fragrance to every flower: and I devote these to Thee, thou Creator, thou Preserver of all, as the expression of my gratitude—as the medium of my worship?"

Such surely is the offering that must have been accepted. It looks so lovely, it is poetry and sentiment too. When Abel brought his offering, and plunged the knife into the heart of an innocent lamb, shed its blood upon the altar, and then God asked to accept



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THE OFFERINGS OF CAIN AND ABEL.

it, we should naturally be tempted to say, Surely Abel's offering will be rejected. How can a loving God accept the destruction of an inoffensive lamb? But we know the world was not in its natural and original state, man was not what he was in Eden; sin had crept into his heart; there was a great moral chasm between the creature and God; a new mode of access was needed outside Eden which was indicated to Adam in Paradise, by the skins of the slaughtered animals in which he was clothed, and thereby the necessity, the duty, and the only acceptableness of animal sacrifices. Cain recognized God as the Creator and Preserver of all, but nothing more; Abel recognized God along with Cain, as the Creator and the Preserver of all but he held another article in his creed, first enunciated at the fall, that man had sinned, that without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin or restoration of man; and therefore, in prospective faith Abel by his offering showed that he already rested on the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, and through faith in Christ found acceptance where Cain found none. In other words, the one was a deistic offering, the other was an evangelical and Protestant sacrifice. Cain looked upon God simply as Creator and Preserver, and man as innocent. Abel looked upon God as a God who hated sin, and upon himself as a sinner, and regarded as he had been taught expiatory sacrifice as the only medium of obtaining mercy, and so prayed for pardon and acceptance. The result was, that the offering of the one was accepted, and that of the other rejected. But how did Cain and Abel know that one was accepted, and the other not? The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering. But unto Cain and his offering He had not respect! The shechinah was placed at the gates of Paradise, with its radiant glory. This was the holy place, as is probable from the fact that Cain left "the presence of the Lord," to dwell at the east of Eden, that is, he departed from the place where the cherubim, and the mercy-seat, and the shechinah were,

which, as afterwards placed in the temple, were recognized as the types of the great atonement made by the Lord Jesus Christ. He left the altar and the glory that consecrated the place in which Adam, Eve, and Abel worshipped and became an excommunicated man.

When the sacrifices of old were accepted, fire fell down from heaven and consumed them. It is therefore likely that a ray from that shechinah lighted upon the sacrifice of Abel and consumed it, the sign of acceptance; and that Cain's remained, or faded away, as withered flowers. But whatever may have been the mode of acceptance, it is stated that the one was visibly accepted of God, and the other as visibly refused.

Abel was grateful, but did not boast as if more righteous than his brother. Cain ought to have been humbled, and to have renounced a corrupt for an evangelical worship. Cain, humbled and convinced of his error, should have confessed it, and cried for forgiveness, and worshipped as Abel did. But our nature had undergone a sad and deep deterioration. In Cain's heart envy had expelled love, and jealousy broken up peace; for seeing his brother Abel was the friend of God, and in the matter of his service visibly accepted of Him, he rose up, not against himself, who only was to blame, but against his unoffending and righteous brother Abel, who had done that which was right, in contrast to his brother, who had done that which he now knew to be wrong. Sin is essentially persecuting. Self-righteousness hates what it cannot emulate. Not only does man impute his own faults upon others, as Adam threw his upon Eve, and Eve hers upon the serpent; but as often as he sees others more prosperous and accepted than himself, he feels the Cain spirit which produces the Cain mark and prompts him to rise up intolerantly against the righteous, because his own works are evil. His countenance falls, his spirit becomes chafed, and that which ought to humble and subdue exasperates to revenge, and in this case to fratricide.

God said to Cain, now a murderer, "Where is Abel thy

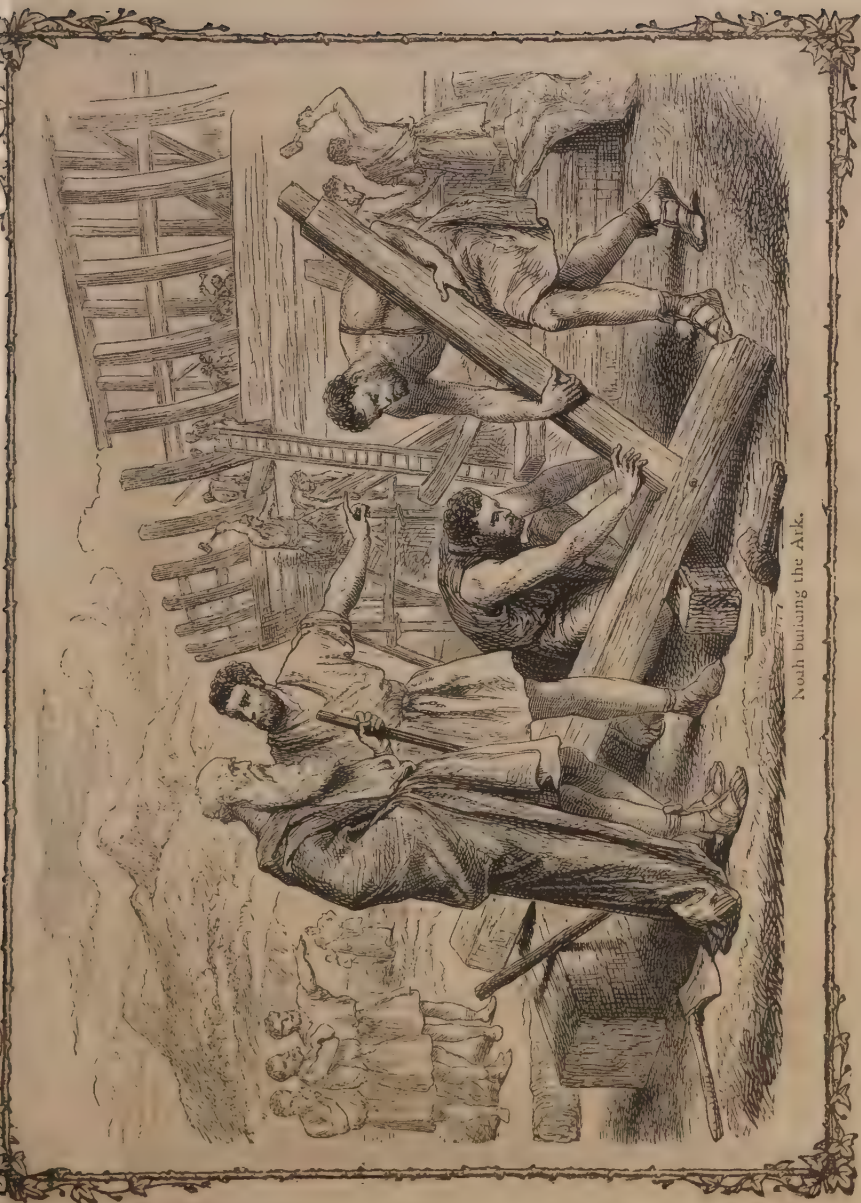
brother?" a question suggestive of his guilt rather than needing a reply. Cain was a murderer, though perhaps not in the strict and severe sense in which we employ that epithet. Murder means premeditated or deliberate design to take away the life of another carried out into act. Cain scarcely knew that the blow he dealt his brother would destroy life. He had never seen death or understood its awful significance; he had never seen, as far as we can learn, a dead man, or a dead child; and although there must have been at least a thousand people in the world by this time, according to calculations fairly and justly made, yet there is no recorded evidence that a single death had occurred, which Cain could have witnessed, either by violence or old age, infirmity, or decay. It is not, therefore, probable that Cain deliberately and designedly took away the life of Abel, or even set out with him for this premeditated end. The language of the interview seems to convey that there had occurred criminal anger and bitter quarrelling between them. It seems that "they talked together in the field." In other words, there was hostile and recriminating conversation. Abel may have been most meek in his remarks and yet not blameless; but Cain, no doubt, must have been most violent in his language. When two persons dispute, he who loses his temper most gives evidence of his being most in the wrong. Cain was utterly in the wrong, and there is therefore no doubt that his language was alike violent and provocative to evil. It was in the excitement of such recriminating conversation that Cain rose up and slew his brother Abel. This would be construed by modern judges and juries to be manslaughter; and so far our estimate of the crime of Cain is modified. Still he slew his brother because his brother's deeds were holy, and his own the opposite.

If we admit there was deliberate and premeditated murder, it was homicide, or rather fratricide of the worst type. If we regard it as we must according to a higher law, it was said, "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment;"

and, again, in 1 John iii. 15, we learn, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer."

God asked the question of Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother?" Cain answered, and added lying to murder. This is matter of course: whoever commits one crime soon perpetrates another, vainly hoping to conceal it, sin always bringing forth sin in inexhaustible progeny. He said he did not know; and not only lied to God, but broke forth into language which indicated how utterly brotherly love had been quenched on the altar of his heart—"Am I my brother's keeper?" that is, "What is he to me? What do I care if he should die? What have I to do with what befalls him?" This alas, is the language of many still. What do I care if the Hindoos go to destruction? What do I care if my next-door neighbour starve, without a fire and without a coat? Cain lives in all that are like him. Every man is responsible to God for his brother's condition. So long as we have sixpence to spare, and our brother needs a penny, we are responsible for that brother wanting the penny of which he stands truly in need.

Where is thy brother? He is under Africa's suns, or he is just living, and no more, amid polar snows. He is amid the steppes of Tartary—a savage; or amid the swarthy millions of Asia—a devotee to superstition. Ignorant he is also in all cases of God; his workshop, the birthplace of his deities; his religion, superstition; his soul, without God, without Christ, and without hope. And yet that African, so bigoted, is thy brother; that Tartar, so savage, is thy brother; that worshipper of the wooden god in the little "swamy house," as they call it, in Hindostan, is thy brother; and there is a link between the darkest heathen and thee. He has left his slippers at the door, and he is prostrate on the floor of the mosque of Omar at Jerusalem, or the mosque of St. Sophia at Constantinople; and his prayers, and praise, and creed are all in one fervent expression,—
"God is great, and Mahomet is his prophet." Or he is at St.



Noah building the Ark.

Peter's in Rome, where the superstition is only revealed more palpably by the scattered lights of truth that are in it. In either case, that worshipper who counts his beads on the floor of St. Peter's, or that Moslem who shouts "God is great, and Mahomet is his prophet" on the floor of St. Sophia, is thy brother; and a responsibility towards both rests upon us, which we can no more shake ourselves loose from than we can shake off our immortality, or escape the certainty of our appearance at the judgment-seat of Christ.

God pronounced upon Cain a very severe sentence. The earth was to be doubly cursed to him; it should not yield to him of its abundance, but he should wander and be a vagabond in the earth. Cain's reply was, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Perhaps that may be justly translated, "My sin is greater than can be forgiven."

No fuller details of the Life of Abel are given in Genesis. But the lessons his life and death taught are scattered over the Word of God. "Abel being dead," says St. Paul, "yet speaketh." Abel speaks to us still; "sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Sin was seen in Cain, and its fruit—death—was illustrated in Abel. In the case of both there was evidence of a relationship lost to God by nature, and, therefore, of a relationship disturbed to each other. When the weeping parents saw death for the first time, and it was the first time it had occurred since Adam and Eve were created, they started in perfect horror from the ghastly spectacle. Adam as a parent wept, and as a sinner he felt poignant remorse, while he recalled to memory his first sin, and saw its earliest rebound in dead Abel. "That dead body is because I sinned. We fell in Eden, and we have dragged all humanity with us."

Abel, being dead, speaks; "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." If Abel's voice were now audible, he would say audibly what now being dead he silently says, "Cain made the experiment of presenting a beauteous offering selected from the

loveliest spots of the blighted earth, and he laid it upon the altar, and presented it to God as an offering expressive of his obedience and his adoration; but the flowers withered as they touched the altar, and the offerer and the offering were blasted and repelled together. I, taught by grace, offered to God the firstling of my flock. I shed the blood of the inoffensive lamb. I did so, not because I believed that lamb's blood could expiate my sins, but because in it I saw the foreshadow, and the pledge, and the type of the blood of that Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and through Him and in Him I have trusted, and have found forgiveness of sin." What Abel detected in the shadow, we now see clearly in the substance. We know in whom we have believed. Jesus died, not a martyr, but an atonement, not an example, but a sacrifice and propitiation for the sins of all that believe.

Abel speaks being dead: "Your light afflictions that are but for a moment, work out for you an exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory. I traversed the rough and the flinty road, but it ended in a blessed home. I passed through a dark and a mysterious porch, but it was the vestibule of a majestic and a glorious temple. Mine indeed was a martyr's death; but it is not worthy to be compared with the weight of glory that is now around my brow. The cross leads to the crown. Afflictions come from the same fountain as the morning dews, and if equally saturating they are equally refreshing too. Your worst trials are but the April showers that precede the bright summer. Your afflictions, light even when heaviest, work out for you an exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory. Be patient, therefore," says the voice of him being dead. "Those clouds will either break in benedictions, or they will be scattered. Those billows will soon be laid; and the rainbow will span the one, and be reflected from the other; and you will say each from the heights of heaven, as I now say, It was good for me that I was afflicted."

Blanks.



HOSE patriarchs who succeeded Abel, and presented in their biography no beautiful and holy traits, occupy a very small space in the sacred record. Their brief epitaphs only are given. The fifth chapter of Genesis reminds us of an ancient burial-place covered with gravestones, on each of which is sculptured a name and written an epitaph, "He died." There is no just and glowing memorial of good deeds, or noble exploits, or real beneficence. They left no trace of goodness on the earth. Their lives were not felt and their deaths were not lamented. They dropt no quickening words that live as music in the memories and joy in the hearts of generations that succeeded them. They created no sympathy while they lived, and there was felt no blank when they were taken away. Selfish and unfeeling they believed the world was made for their gratification, and its most bountiful provisions for their tables. The maelstroms of their age, they sucked into their depths all they could attract or reach, careless who perished if they were fed. They regarded all things around them as meant to subserve their interests, passions, and enjoyments. The sunshine was designed to gladden them, the winds to cool their brows, the flowers to be their carpet, and earth to be their servant, and its golden crops to fill their barns. They cared not who pined if they were fed, who grieved and wept if they

were comfortable, who died of hunger if they were full, who was sick if they were well. Living they did no good, and dead they did not speak any sustaining and cheering word. Their lives were long, but the lessons they teach are few and far between; and if made profitable to us it is only as beacons and buoys are to ships at sea, they warn us off from barren sands and rugged rocks, and dangerous reefs, they were cumberers of the ground; they bore no fruit, and cast their cold shadows on fruitful trees, and drew to themselves those kindly juices which absorbed by others would have grown into flower and fruit. Their protracted age was their misfortune; it added to their guilt, and increased their responsibility. Beneath their far and long-projecting shadows many a tender plant died, and many a sweet blossom withered. Had their lives been shorter, others had been better and happier. It is a mystery we cannot unravel that bad men should harden into old age, and good men die in their prime, that the least useful should often be the long-lived, and the most useful often short-lived; that Methuselah should live nine hundred sixty and nine years, and Moses only one hundred and twenty. To the early dead it is gain, but to a fallen world it is loss.

It is sin, in such a world as ours, to pass through it passive and useless beings. Some are blots—that is very sad; some are blessings—that is very delightful; but not a few, I fear, are blanks, who do nobody any harm, and nobody any good. The salt has lost its savour—the light is hidden under a bushel. It is good not to have been a curse. But when the judgment ordeal comes, and when all shall be gathered around the great white throne, the charge against the lost is not that they did infinite harm, but that they did no good. “I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.” These seem to have been ruined by a negative character. Of the

saved it is recorded, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." The Saviour estimates the depth, and fervour, and fulness of our charity, not by the amount of our offering, but by the warmth of the heart that gives it. The Pharisees and the Sadducees threw ostentatiously their talents into the plate ; one poor widow threw in two mites, less than two farthings, all that she had ; but whilst the sound of the falling talents rose no higher than the height of the Pharisees that gave them, these two mites woke music in that plate which had its echoes in the realms of glory, and her act is commemorated with praise, whilst theirs is unnoticed and unknown. We ought not to be blanks, doing nothing ; still less to be blots, doing mischief ; but we are to try to be blessings over all the sphere in which God has placed us. Every truth of the Bible teaches "the grace of God," that is free ; pardon free, justification free, acceptance gratis, without money and without price. What does it do ? It teaches us, first, the negative lesson, "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts ;" it teaches us also "to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, our great God and Saviour ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Hence, wherever there is a heart regenerated by grace, there there will be the relaxed hand, the elastic step, the charity that never faileth. Why are we made saints ? Just that we may become servants. Why is one man made richer than another ? Not that he may exact more, but that he may give more. It will be a poor memorial of you and me if it can only be said of us that, like Cain, we have built cities, or, like Jubal, we have made musical instru-

ments of brass, or, like Tubal-Cain, we have shaped brass and iron into forms of beauty, or that, like Jabal, we have pitched tents, if we have done nothing to subserve the everlasting interests of immortal souls. In passing through this world, we ought never to forget there are broken hearts that need to be comforted. And what would be music to such a heart? You need not always go and preach a sermon, or leave a tract; one gentle word dropped into that heart may be its resuscitation from death, its restoration to happiness and to heaven. It is not long addresses, it is not sermons full of sacred words, that we are called upon to address to the broken-hearted, and the mourning, and the depressed, and the desolate, under the dark shadows of this world. It is to speak a word in season; and such a word, behold, how good it is!

But long as these cumberers lived, they did not live for ever. Of the oldest it is written—"He died."

Sin entered, and death by sin, and therefore death passed on all. Our lives are shorter now. Perhaps it is in mercy, not in wrath; for thus the good are taken sooner home, and the wicked inflict less evil. Let us strive to be good and to do good: "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;" "work while it is called to-day, the night cometh when no man can work."



Enoch.



HERE is no blank in this world without a corresponding blessing ; there is no barren spot in which there is not something that indicates a brighter and a better state. Hence we find in the midst of this chapter of blanks, and of some blots, one huge blessing. “Enoch walked with God ; and he was not, for God took him.” Here is a plant growing in the desert, the evidence of influences from the sky. When Mungo Park travelled the African deserts, when, thirsty and hungry, he lay down to die—under him the burning earth, and above him the hot, brassy sky—his eye lighted on one tiny flower ; the sight revived his hopes, for he argued, and argued with a logic that was irresistibly conclusive, “If God takes care of this flower in the desert, He can’t have forgotten me.” That was strictly and beautifully true. That flower in the desert needed divine care to keep it alive. Distant oceans were drifted in the shape of rain to refresh it ; rays from a remote sun came as missionaries to warm it ; and the chemistry of a soil not utterly exhausted nourished it ; and God’s smiles gave it its tints, and God’s breath gave it its fragrance ; and that flower in the midst of the burning sand was a witness to Park that God was there. So here an Enoch walking with God, and taken home, and spared the shame, and the sorrow, and the necessity of dying, was a ray of heaven in the midst of the

thick night—a flower in the midst of the barren desert—a star on the bosom of the dark sky—an evidence that God was there, though the world knew it not.

There never was a desert in which there was not a flower ; never a black night in which there was not some star ; never a century so barren that there was not some one that adorned it by his virtues, or contributed to it by his learning and his goodness. We shall find in the antediluvian world, amidst the Methuselahs, and the Lamechs, and the Cains, an Enoch. In the patriarchal world we shall find an Abraham, an Isaac, a Jacob, a Joseph. In the Levitical age, we shall find, in spite of all the rebellions, and apostacies, and sins that were there, a Moses and an Aaron. In the decadence of the Jewish system we shall find a Simeon and an Anna looking for the hope that gladdened the hearts of Israel. In the heart of Europe, when the Church of Rome crushed and overlay the Church at Rome, and the succession was to be traced by a few bright and shining links, not by priests that had become profane, and bishops whose names were reproaches to Christendom—we shall find an Agobard, a Henri, a Waldo, and others of whom the world was not worthy. In the depths of Babylon itself, in the midst of the Church of Rome, I believe God has a people. There are Roman Catholics in the Protestant Church, and there are Protestants in the Roman Catholic Church : the Roman Catholics *in* the Protestant Church in it, but not *of* it ; the Protestants in the Roman Catholic Church *in* it, but not *of* it. Hence, when the judgments of Babylon are about to descend upon all that share in her sins, a voice rings clear and musical from heaven, “Come out of her, my people, that ye partake not of her sins, and receive not of her plagues.”

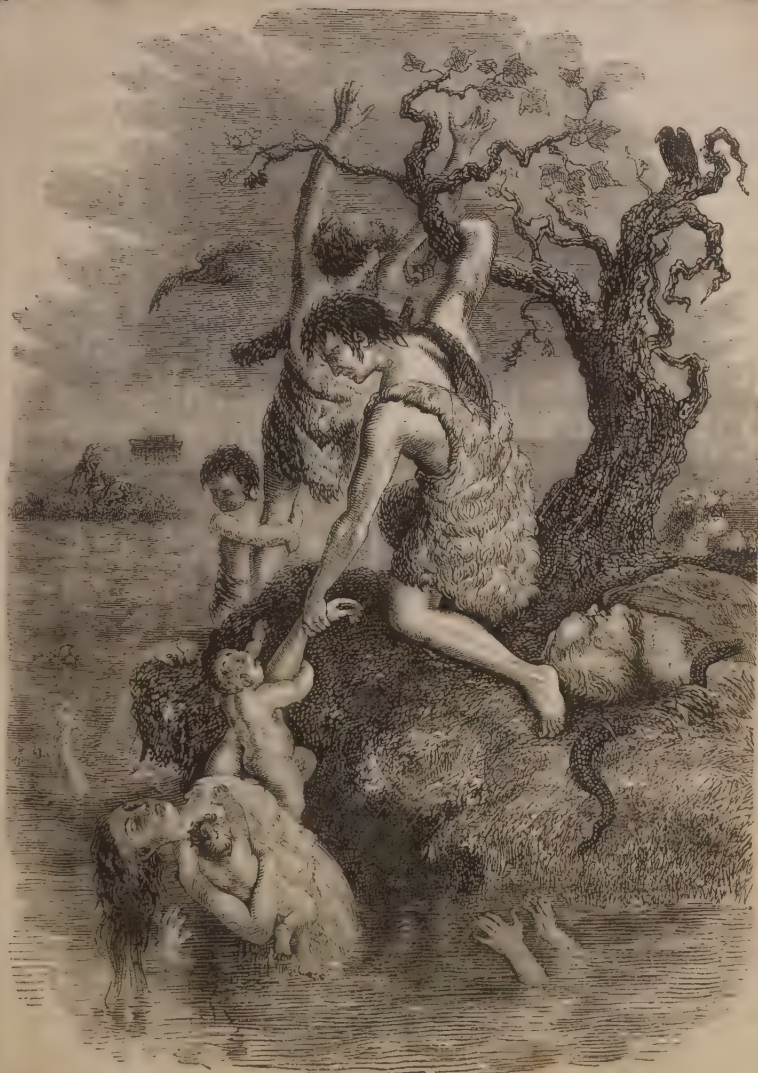
“Enoch”—this exceptional case in the midst of the universal night—“walked with God.” No word is more descriptive, more eloquently descriptive, of a Christian’s biography. If he walked with God, he must have found the right way. But what is that

right way ? We read, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me : I am the way, the truth, and the life." Then, if Enoch walked with God, as friend, as worshipper, as servant, he must have walked in that only way in which man can walk with God, and find God a Father. Hence every one that denies Christ as the way is not on the road to heaven. The mere philosopher, who infers the existence of a God from the exquisitely beautiful and suggestive phenomena of nature, comes to a Creator. The Pantheist comes to a being he can neither define, nor comprehend, nor understand. But the Christian, by Christ, comes not to the Creator who is above him, not to the Legislator who is against him, but to the Father who is with him, and with whom he walks as a son perpetually.

If Enoch thus walking in this right way, walked with God, he must have agreed with God. "How can two walk together, unless they be agreed?" It is quite plain, then, that Enoch must have agreed with God in those great truths which were preached amidst the wrecks of Paradise, which were sealed by the sacrifice on the cross, which were announced in every language at the day of Pentecost ; which are expressed in our Bibles in letters that can never fade, and which are written in Christian hearts in characters that can never die. He must have believed in the ruin of man, in his restoration only through an atonement, in the hope of Jesus Christ the great Redeemer, in the duty of obedience to a holy law ; in all these he must have agreed with God. If two people differ politically, morally, ecclesiastically, religiously, they never can walk together ; unless they have extremely good and sainted tempers, they cannot walk long together in friendship and in peace. Difference of opinion leads to deflection of conduct ; deflection of conduct leads to desertion one of the other. The instant you begin to differ from God, you begin to say, "Well, I like this, and God condemns it ; and I don't like that, and God commands it ;" that moment you

retreat from God ; like Adam and Eve, you run and hide yourself from God. You do not want to hear the gospel preached ; you do not like to hear the great truths of Christianity brought home to your conscience, and you run away. You cease to listen to the voice of holy truth, and you go to some church where the ceremonies are most beautiful, where the minister is not a good preacher of living truth, but a great master of splendid ceremonial. These things act upon you as opiates ; they keep the conscience from troubling you, the reason from questioning, the heart from doubting ; and just as Adam hid himself amid the trees of Paradise, when he found that God and he had quarrelled, so many a young man, and many a young woman too, whenever they cannot stand the preaching of the truths that come home to their consciences with power, run and hide themselves amidst gewgaws, and ceremonies, and forms, and incense, and pictures, and similar mummeries. They there have "peace, peace ;" yet there is before God no peace at all. Let us never shrink from hearing the most unpalatable truths. That patient will never get well who refuses the healing medicine because it is nauseous to his taste. That worshipper will never be saved who rejects the truths that first disturb him. All truth disturbs at the outset. If we were what we should be, we should never be disturbed ; but the first flash of pure and heavenly truth shining into the dark chambers of the soul creates tremendous disquiet. That very disquiet is preferable to the "peace, peace, when there is no peace :—" "a living dog is better than a dead lion." There is the peace of life, and there is the peace of death. Seek ye that peace which can only be reached through the truth and in walking with God, as Enoch walked with Him, and "was not."

Enoch must have not only agreed with God in mind, but he must have agreed with Him also in heart. Differing intellectually from another is not unendurable ; but when we differ from another in heart and feeling, there is a quarrel. Now, between God and man there is a quarrel, a great quarrel, a quarrel that can be healed



The Deluge.

only by one sovereign and all-sufficient remedy. If the heart be, as Scripture tells us, "enmity to God," this enmity must be dissolved, and love, the cement between heaven and earth, must take its place, so that of twain there shall be made one. And therefore what is wanting is not simply an enlightened mind. You may know all the debates that have stirred the world, from the days when Jerome and Pelagius quarrelled, onward to the days when Martin Luther and his contemporaries, and Calvin, and Zwinglius, disputed; onward to the days when the whole of England and Scotland surge with theologilca disputes. You may know all these, and you may be able to reason with irresistible logic, and yet not one truth may be lodged in the heart, as a living, a plastic, and a saving force. It is not the head in most cases that needs to be illuminated, but the heart that needs to be regenerated. Hence the language of the Word of God: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Enoch must have had a mind which was at one with God's will; he must have had a heart which was submitted to God's holy law. No doubt it was not always perfect; his convictions sometimes wavered, his affections sometimes grew cold. The frosts and the winter winds of this world nip affections that belong to a nobler and a better; but still the sap remains in the root, rises still through the stem, until the everlasting summer break, in unclouded sunshine, upon our world, when all shall be righteous, and there shall be no death, and no sorrow, and no sin.

Enoch, in thus walking with God, must have had perfect confidence in God. In a Christian's life are many things to discourage, many things that tempt men sometimes very rashly, but very naturally, to say, "Well, I will give up religion at once, I can stand it no longer; it is a vain thing to serve the Lord." You have been tempted to say so; yet God forgives the temptation, as soon as forgiveness is asked. Enoch, in walking with God, must have met many a storm, and wrestled with many a hurricane, and have felt the

descending rain and the cold snow-flakes ; he often felt the road very long, very rugged, very uphill ; he must have been sometimes foot-sore, and oftentimes tempted to give way, and to lie down and die. But he held on through the worst, for he had learnt that he that endureth unto the end shall be saved. We, too, have many a trouble. If we had no trouble, we should not be here ; if we had no doubts, we should be in heaven. I would rather grapple with the doubts of an earnest heart than put up with the acceptance of everything, the questioning of nothing. An earnest doubt is better than a traditional and unfounded belief. If I have many trials, many troubles, many griefs, many afflictions, but have confidence in the Being with whom I walk, and in whom I trust, then I will not give up ; “ God is my refuge and my strength ; ” “ When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee, when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee ; ” “ I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee.” I will recollect these beautiful promises, and plead them in prayer, and feel the weight, and force, and consolation of that glowing chapter which begins with “ No condemnation to them that are in Christ,” and ends with “ no separation to them from Christ : ” “ For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Have we confidence in God, confidence in what God tells us in his own Word about Himself ? A soldier will not march to battle unless he has confidence in his officer ; a sailor will not go out into the open sea unless he has confidence in his ship ; a moneyed man will not trust a banker unless he has confidence in his solvency ; a patient will not take nauseous draughts unless he has confidence in the skill of his physician ; a Christian will not endure to the end

unless he has confidence in his God. Now, what is wanted in the present is just confidence in God—confidence in what He says about us, about Himself, about the way of everlasting life. If we are thus walking with God, thus confiding in Him, we shall never fail. People often say, What do you mean by stating that a person is saved by faith? The word means confidence, trust. Trust, or confidence, is the most vital and valuable element in commercial and social life. Exhaust your confidence in the Government, and everybody that has one hundred pounds in the Three Per Cent. Consols will be there to-morrow to get it out. Exhaust your confidence in a bank, and everybody that has a balance in that bank will be there very early to-morrow to withdraw the balance. Exhaust confidence from merchants, from the Royal Exchange, what would be the consequence? That all our commerce would go to pieces, the glory would depart, and England would be a social ruin. If confidence be of such value in social life, why should we complain that confidence, as an instrument, as a means, is of saving value in the things of the world to come?

Thus Enoch had confidence in God. When he came to a very rough part of the road, he said, "Well, it's very rough, and I am very weary; but I am walking in God's way, in God's order, according to his commandments, and I will hold on;" and he did so. And he came to another part, where there were wild beasts on the right, and shadows and spectral illusions on the left, and he began to be alarmed; he said, "God is for me; who can be against me?" And he came to another part of the road, where he heard the oaths, and the curses, and the swearing of antediluvians, who feared neither God, nor man, nor the devil, and he was shocked and terrified: he prayed for them, and clung fast to God for protection. And at last, when the night seemed to grow darker, and his strength exhausted, and the weariness of the way no longer endurable, God spared him that melancholy journey, as it seems to us, the journey

through the valley of the shadow of death ; at one bound he leaped over it ; his last breath was everlasting refreshment, his last moment upon earth made him free of the universe of God.

We may not be thus taken, we may not be thus translated ; but we are just as safe as Enoch was. Enoch is the type and representative of those who will never die. There is a portion of people in this world that will never die at all. It is not appointed to all men to die, as we sometimes read it ; the word *all* is not in the original. " It is appointed unto men to die." We read that, when our Lord comes, those that are alive shall instantly be changed, and those that are dead in Christ shall instantly be quickened. If our Lord's second advent be near, as some of the wisest, and best, and most gifted students of prophecy believe ; if the shadows of this world's evening are lengthening, and the sun of time setting, and the day far spent, and the everlasting and beautiful morn soon to begin to gild the horizon with a glory that will never fade, then some of the young may never die ; they may be, like Enoch, translated, not doomed to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. But the aged, in all probability, will die. Yet what is death to a Christian ? The same Jesus that walked upon the ocean, and along the ups and downs of this weary, troubled, stormy world, will walk with us through the valley of the shadow of death, so that we may say, " I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."

Enoch's walk with God was a walk of continuous obedience. Love, and confidence, and harmony of mind begat loyalty, fealty, obedience. If we are walking with God, we shall obey God. Our inquiry will be at every stage, not what others think, but what God has said. Our supreme inquiry will be less what the most learned or the most gifted in the world think, or say, or write ; but what God says in his holy Word. There is everlasting truth, if the whole world should deny it ; and what God condemns is deadly error, if the whole world should praise it. Our consideration will be, not what is palatable, not what is popular, not what is profitable, not what

will please this man, not what will gratify that man. Our duty, like our hope, is to be gathered from all holy Scripture given by inspiration of God, profitable for doctrine, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

Are we walking with God? With all its ups and downs, with all its length, its crookedness, and its frequent loneliness, it will be to us, what it has been in ages past, a very pleasant way. It is true a Christian has much to contend with—and because a Christian, the devil will specially attack him. The devil does not sift the chaff, it is not worth sifting; he sifts the wheat. The devil does not tempt and try, and persecute those that he is sure of; it is those that have enlisted in the army of the living God that he assaults. Because a Christian, yours will be many temptations, many trials, many storms to buffet, many troubles to contend with; sometimes provoking your temper, irritating your feelings, tempting you to say, as David said in the 73rd Psalm, “Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.” But hold on. Your safety, thanks be to God! is not in the strength of your grasp of Christ, but in the tenacity of Christ’s grasp of you; your salvation rests, not upon the firmness of your hold, but upon the faithfulness of the word, and the fixity of the hold, of Him who has said, “I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee.” Walk with God in reading his Word, in waiting upon his ordinances, in listening to the gospel, in translating into life on Monday the lessons that you hear on Sunday; in living soberly, righteously, and godly; in trying to make the world a little sunnier because you have passed through it, and some home a little brighter because you have entered it, and some heart a little happier because you have dropped a word of consolation into it; and you will find your path, like the path of Enoch, on the whole, a happy path: and when the years are exhausted, and life’s long day is done, your sun will set in the west, only to rise with augmented splendour in the everlasting east!

Oray.



NOAH appears, on the eve of the deluge, a perfect contrast to the corrupt population among whom he lived. The first sin had darkened into blacker hues, and spread over the whole area of the inhabited earth. Love had become lust. The very imaginations of the thoughts of men's hearts had become evil. Crime was no longer an incidental occurrence, but the normal habit of the age. Because committed in concert, they thought its guilt was distributed. They supposed the world was given up to their enjoyment, and that God had withdrawn from all personal superintendence of it, and repealed the everlasting law that connects sin with adequate retribution. Men do in masses what they would not attempt as individuals, and evil rises to a degree of intensity and virulence in such a case, which calls down the righteous and overwhelming judgments of heaven. God pronounced the judicial sentence He had long and patiently delayed. "The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them, and behold I will destroy them from the earth." One enriched by his grace, and a beautiful exception in the all but universal corruption, found favour in the sight of God. He was not the creation of the age, but of inspirations that descended from above. The features that distinguished him from all his contem-

poraries were these:—he was “upright in his generation;” “he walked with God;” “him only God saw to be righteous before Him in that generation.” These are noble traits.

Noah did not do as others in his day. How common is it to hear people say, “We must do as others do;” “In Rome we must do as Rome does.” Such maxims were probably as popular then as they are now. But from Noah they received no hospitality or acceptance. He regarded as worthy of his reverence and adoption, not the example of others, but the commands of his God. He looked upward, not around, for direction. He walked with God, and therefore contrary to men. It was of no consequence to him that another walk was strewn with flowers, vocal with song, and crowded with thousands; his was chosen, and persistently held. He was deaf to every entreaty to do as others did, and live as others lived, because he knew and felt his walk with God alone was the path of duty. He cared little that he was denounced as a fanatic, a fool, and a disturber of the peace and pleasures of others. The caricatures of the wit, and the sarcasm of the satirist, fell unheeded on him. His heart beat high above all. His path was fearlessly chosen and faithfully held. He grieved over the wickedness of others, but he had no misgiving about the course he himself had chosen. He lamented the doom they had provoked, and exerted all his influence and eloquence to induce them to repent; but, notwithstanding, he still walked with God.

God so honoured this representative patriarch, that, for his sake, He saved from the flood all his family. “Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark, for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.” Thus family blessings fall where a father’s character shines. Personal piety, in every age and condition, sheds around it social influences. No man lives for himself. He moves on, an influence for good or evil on others. Living we act, and dead we speak. We are blots or blessings—helps to heaven, or obstructions to it.

Noah and his family, and selected representatives of every living thing, entered the ark, a floating house, dependent for its safety amid the waves neither on the strength of its timbers, nor on the skill of its crew, but entirely on the superintending presence and power of God. Human instrumentality was used, as is still God's way ; but Divine power was its protection and its strength. After a hundred and fifty days' rising of the huge tidal ocean, the waters began to abate. The green tops of the mountains afterwards emerged from beneath the waste of waters, and Noah resolved to take soundings, but such as are not taken now. He sent out first a raven, which seems to have kept going and coming till the entire subsidence of the sea. He next sent forth a dove, which, finding no spot to rest on, returned to the ark. After another seven days he sent forth the dove, and the bird returned with an olive leaf in its beak—a sign full of hope to Noah. Does not this beautiful incident in Noah's life remind the reader of Him who descended on the Son of Man as a dove—who brings into the hearts of his people earnestness of departed storms and rays of brightening sunshine—who takes a leaf from the tree of life, and lays it, a healing power, on the heart that is broken, and awakens feelings of hope where despair has long brooded? Noah remained in the ark yet other seven days, and forthwith heard the voice that said at the beginning of the flood, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark," say now, "Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee." It was a beautiful trait in the conduct of this ancient patriarch that God's command to enter or to go out was followed by unquestioning obedience. Seeming peril did not alarm, and arduous duty did not discourage, one whose whole confidence lay in the Word of God, whose only light was from heaven. Terrestrial paths are best laid down by celestial observations.

"God shut him in!" Striking illustration of the truth that He who begins our course will end it, that He who is the author of our

salvation will also be its finisher ! It was as necessary that God's hand should shut the door, as it was that God's command should open it—that God should take care of Noah while he was in the ark, as that He should appoint that ark for a house of safety for Noah and his family. If the ark may be accepted in any sense as a type of our blessed Lord, we may gather it is as necessary that God should now keep us in the Saviour, as it is that He should place us in the Saviour at first. Our salvation is not complete by being placed in Christ ; it is only complete by being kept in Christ. We are told by an apostle, that “ we are kept through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” We are told by the Saviour Himself, “ I give unto them eternal life, and none shall be able to pluck them out of my hand.” A Christian is not one who, believing he is placed in Christ, therefore ceases to hear, to pray, to look, to feel. He not only feels that he must be placed in Christ by the hand that made him, through the exercise of personal faith on his part, but he looks and leans on, and derives *momentum* and direction from, the same hand that put him there. He feels at every step of his upward and happy progression, that unless God keep him, as God first justified him, he can never taste happiness here, or see heaven hereafter. A Christian feels the necessity of a ceaseless reliance upon God. He knows he is safe, not in the strength of his faith, but by the pledges and the promises of Him who gave it. Noah, in that frail ark, was safer than those who were in the strongest ships that floated and sought their safety on that tempestuous and agitated ocean. Not by the strength of his vessel, but by the protection of his God, was Noah safe. We too in Christ Jesus are safe, not because our faith is so strong, but because his hold of us is so real.

Noah, as commanded and instructed by God, spoke to the creatures—the beasts of the earth, the birds of the air, and creeping things, and ordered them to come into the ark. Perhaps he feared

this was an impossible thing; but no sooner did he speak as God commanded, than all animated things heard and obeyed. There was a vestige here of his ancient dominion over nature, lost in Eden, and restored to Noah upon this special occasion. Thus the way to recover man's lost dominion over nature is to recover God's image on his own soul. Noah obeyed his God, and all nature obeyed its chief.

Noah preached to thousands who would not hear him; let it not be that ministers of Christ preach to us, and find us also equally sceptical. They perished temporally; we perish, by neglecting the great salvation, eternally. Christ Himself preaches to us, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If we are found in that Divine Ark, however poor and insignificant in this world's social scale, God will no more forget us than He will forget Himself. He who remembered Noah in the ark, weighed every wave, meted out every wind, shaped the courses of both, and carried to Ararat the patriarch, his family, and living creatures, as truly takes care of the poorest Christian orphan or widow as if they were the only beings in the universe. A mother may forget her son, that she should not have compassion on the child of her womb, yet will not God forget thee. He has graven thee upon the palms of his hands, He holds thee in everlasting remembrance. "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires."



"Noah sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro until the waters were dried up."

Noah's Entrance into the Ark.



UR whole race had become corrupt, a universal apostacy prevailed. The leading feature of that apostacy was not so much ignorance that God was, but universal materialism. What they believed they did not act out. The Deity, whose existence they accepted as a fact, they spurned as the Director and the Inspirer of their lives. "They did eat, and drink, and married, and gave in marriage, until the flood came." The very era that precedes

Christ's second, personal, glorious advent, finds its perfect parallelism in the era that preceded the outburst of the flood in the days of Noah. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be when the Son of man cometh." There is, in the present day, a vague homage to Christianity as an ancient creed; but in many of the organs of public sentiment it is ignored, as a real living power in the hearts and consciences of men. Literature is less and less inspired by Christian principle; policy steers the ship of the State by the meteor lights of expediency, instead of the lode-stars that shine from the firmament for ever; society is knit together by conventionalisms, not by the cement of living love and truth; bargains are sharp and hard in the commercial world—the product of selfishness and materialism. In the state that prevailed in the antediluvian era,

God launched the awful word upon the world, "I will destroy all flesh!" and the only exception that He made was that of a man that walked with Him, who obeyed his law, who was old-fashioned enough to believe in a God, an eternity, a judgment-seat; and with Noah his family also was saved for his sake. It is a very beautiful idea that runs through the whole of the Word of God, that the good of the fathers is visited upon the sons, that the children and descendants are blessed for their parents' sake. It is on this idea that the sacrament of baptism, as it prevails in most Churches, is observed. Noah, because righteous, was preserved; his children, not because they were righteous, but because of the righteousness of their parent, were delivered from the impending judgment. So, it has been argued, parents are members of the Church of Christ; their children, because of the parents' membership, may be admitted into the Church below, and so far brought within reach of the means of grace and the hopes of glory that culminate in the Church above. Noah was "a preacher of righteousness;" and at the eleventh hour, upon the very knell of the rending earth, and the shattered atmosphere, and the upheaving floods, he besought all his voice could reach to come into the ark and be saved. He warned them of the judgment—when the tempestuous storm would burst upon the world, and all flesh, except a handful in that box of gopher wood, or cypress tree, would be swept off the face of the earth. The antediluvians despised him; but the words of Noah were echoes of words that were pronounced in heaven, and they learned when it was too late—not because God was unmerciful or precipitate in his judgments, for He was bearing and forbearing to the very verge of the descending storm—that Noah's words were true, that like the Apostle Paul he was not mad, but spake the words of soberness and of truth.

Then, when all Noah's efforts failed to convince the multitude, and to induce them to accept his invitation, "God shut Noah in."

What a beautiful expression is that! God said to Noah, "Let them despise you; let them prophesy all manner of disaster; my wisdom has arranged the ark, and my hand now tenderly shuts you in. God did not shut anybody out; He shut Noah in. God has not elected anybody to hell, but He has chosen them that believe to everlasting glory. God shuts out none from instant pardon, everlasting peace, inextinguishable hopes of glory; but all that will enter He shuts in. "He openeth, and no man shutteth; He shutteth, and no man openeth."

We may assume that the ark has at least in it illustrations of the gospel of Christ. I will not say that the ark is a type; and yet in the New Testament there is suggested a typical reference. If man had been requested to construct the ark, without the architectural specifications of heaven, he would have built a very different vessel indeed. He would have built it with a keel, with masts and sails, and with beams and planks of gnarled oak, fastened together by means and resources so strong, that it would be sure, in virtue of its strength, to ride out any gale, however tempestuous, that could beat upon it. But God did not so order it; He Himself gave the plan. Noah was the carpenter, God was the architect. It was built of cypress wood, a very lasting, but not a very strong wood. It was put together as a sort of parallelogram; a long base, flat sides, flat bottom, and a little slope in the roof, about a cubit and a half in pitch—the least fitted to buffet the storm, or to live in a heavy sea. May there not be in this something like a shadow of the mode of a sinner's salvation? If salvation had been left to man to devise, it would have been something magnificent, impressive, shining with all sorts of material and historic glory. But the salvation of the gospel is a salvation wrought out by One despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; repudiated as the carpenter's son, denounced as Jesus of Nazareth, a companion of publicans and sinners; a salvation on a cross, through crucifixion,

the most detestable death, according to ancient popular opinion, and the most ignominious. Such is the way in which God has saved a world, and taken glory to Himself. And so naturally repulsive is the religion of Christ—I mean its main article, the cross—so repulsive is it to man, that when you bid one believe, he will just do as one did of old, he will say, “If you had bid me do some great thing, then I could understand it; but to bid me wash and be clean, to bid me look and live, to bid me believe in a Crucified One as being crowned with eternal glory, there is no consistency, no logic, nothing there that vindicates itself to my mind.” But in all this the man that rejects is a standing proof of what God has said: “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.” The natural mind would like a Church all full of lights and shadows, with all the colours of the rainbow, and all that is gorgeous and magnificent in ceremonial, such as is to be seen in the Vatican, at St. Peter’s at Rome. But that is very miserable. Material splendour, masons, and carpenters, and painters, and milliners, and drapers, can easily create; it is the cheapest thing in the world, and it is the poorest thing that is created. But what is the glory that man does not like? That inner, spiritual, moral glory which will outlive the stars, and is the glory of heaven, and will be the splendour of the shechinah when Christ returns to reign from sea to sea. All God’s ways and doings are simple. The simplest rites are, in my humble judgment, the sublimest. Compare, for instance, what is called the Lord’s Supper in St. Peter’s at Rome, with what we believe to be the Lord’s Supper as we celebrate it. Take the precious sacrament of the Lord’s Supper in the English or Scottish Church, and then see one in the Roman Catholic Church. Why, the two things are so different, so totally different, that if one be divine, the other must necessarily be human; and if the severe simplicity of the one has a sublimity that the highest and the noblest taste appreciates, the tawdry grandeur and magnificence of the other takes away from all its

real greatness, and makes it but a show—a splendid feast for the eye, but no feast for a loving, and believing, and simple soul.

There was no safety outside of the ark. The flood rose above tower and tree, surging over the crags of Mount Ararat itself, and everything perished in the waste of waters, while that frail, poor, helpless ark floated in safety. And why in safety? Not because its timbers were strong, not because its crew were accomplished sailors, not because its captain had some acquaintance with navigation and the sea; it was strong because Omnipotence was in it, Omnipresence was over it, and God's word committed it to its landing safely on Ararat, to look forth upon a world depopulated and dismantled, but a world in which Noah and Noah's sons would play no mean or unimportant part.

While the ark was thus safe, and floated safely across the waters, we must not suppose that all within were perfectly assured of their safety. Noah, and his wife, and his sons, and their wives, talked together; and sometimes I have no doubt one and then another gave up heart and hope. And when the vessel sometimes lurched in the trough of the sea, or broached to in the tempestuous gale, Noah's wife thought it was all over with her, that the poor creeping things would be knocked to pieces, and would be scattered like drift-wood upon the surging waves; and yet they did not perish. Now what does that teach us? That our safety for ever is not in the strength of our faith, not in the weight of our confidence, not in the excellence of our character, but in Christ's ability to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through Him. And then, whilst Noah, and his children, and wife, and family had much disquiet and fear, probably much discomfort, and did not enjoy the happiness they might have enjoyed, yet their safety was not the least impaired. The doubts of Noah, the fears of his wife, the alarm of his family, never for one moment shook the certainty of the ark's floating on the waters and reaching its destined resting-place; but it

took away a great deal from their comfort. Whilst they were in it, during these fifty days, they may have often felt very uncomfortable and unhappy. So it is with some Christians ; their doubts, their fears, their despondency, their temptation to give up all for lost, and to leave every Church, and give themselves to the world as helpless and despairing, is very sad, very sinful, very grievous to God ; but their safety, thank God, is contingent, not upon the peace of their heart, nor upon the strength of their faith, but upon the omnipotent power of Him who has said, " I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and none shall pluck them out of my hand." Let me therefore ask such, whenever they feel discouraged and discomfited, or begin to give all up, and to say, " Well, I do not believe that I am a Christian, and Christianity cannot be true, and I really will not attend to these things any more ;" not then to begin to examine their own hearts ; not to look within at all, this will only make matters worse ; but to look out, and look up, and read the promise of Him who has said, " Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." " The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." " O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones." " For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee." These are your comforts ; these the sparkling gems in the roof that shed down splendour on the darkest chamber. Look up to these ; do not look within ; then you will have peace, the peace that passeth understanding.

The first intimation that Noah had of the retiring waters, and

of the probable and approaching subsidence of the ark upon the solid ground, was the return of a dove which he had sent forth from one of the tiny windows of the ark, with an olive-leaf in its mouth, showing that the waters had so far subsided that an olive-tree could be reached by the dove, and an olive-leaf could be cropped from it, and brought to the ark. Now, it is a very beautiful thought that the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is represented by the dove. Even in Genesis we read, "The Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters;" literally, "kept fluttering, after the manner of a dove, upon the waters." So we read again in the Gospel, that "the Spirit descended as a dove descends." We have, therefore, the Spirit of God represented figuratively by the dove. Now, just as the dove brought back to Noah in the ark the olive-leaf, the symbol beautifully significant of peace, so the blessed Spirit, the Divine Comforter, comes from the cross, and brings a branch of that olive-tree, and deposits its fruit, which is for food, and its leaf, which is for healing, in many a human heart, and "justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." And thus the Spirit assures the believer that the storm-clouds of Sinai are dispersed, and have disappeared for ever; that the troubled ocean which our sins had provoked and convulsed is laid under the feet of Him who once said, "Peace, be still," and with these words calmed it for ever; and that a holy land, brighter, more beautiful, than Ararat, begins to emerge from the waste of waters, over which no thunder-cloud shall hang, on which no tempestuous storm shall beat, on which a sun shall shine that shall have no western setting or declension for ever and for ever. The Holy Spirit in the present day, just as in past ages, brings the olive-leaf, and lays it upon the hearts that ache, and bids the troubled spirit trust in the Lord, and be still.

In that ark there was a tiny and a transient symbol of that beautiful day which will one day break upon this poor troubled earth of ours, when literally the sword shall be turned into the ploughshare,

the lion and the lamb shall play together, and a little child shall lead them ; when there shall be no war, nor conflict, nor dispute, nor misunderstanding, in all God's holy mountain. Blessed thought, that day comes nearer every week ! And it will come at an hour when thousands think not. They that denounce the anticipation of it, just as people in Noah's day denounced his prophecy of the approaching flood, are, in their way, proving the signs that we are nearing the Saturday evening of the world's long and weary week. For what does Peter say ? "In the last day shall come scoffers, walking after their own lusts, saying, Where is the promise of his coming ? all things continue as they were from the beginning." But a day is approaching when all science will justify the Word of God. Astronomy will descend from its starry heights, and geology will come up from its subterranean depths, and chemistry will come from its crucibles, and history from its researches, and all will justify God's Word as everlasting truth ; and they that believed and trusted in a cross, and looked with all their hearts for a Saviour to come crowned with many crowns, will be justified by the world as wise in their generation.



The Rainbow on Ararat.

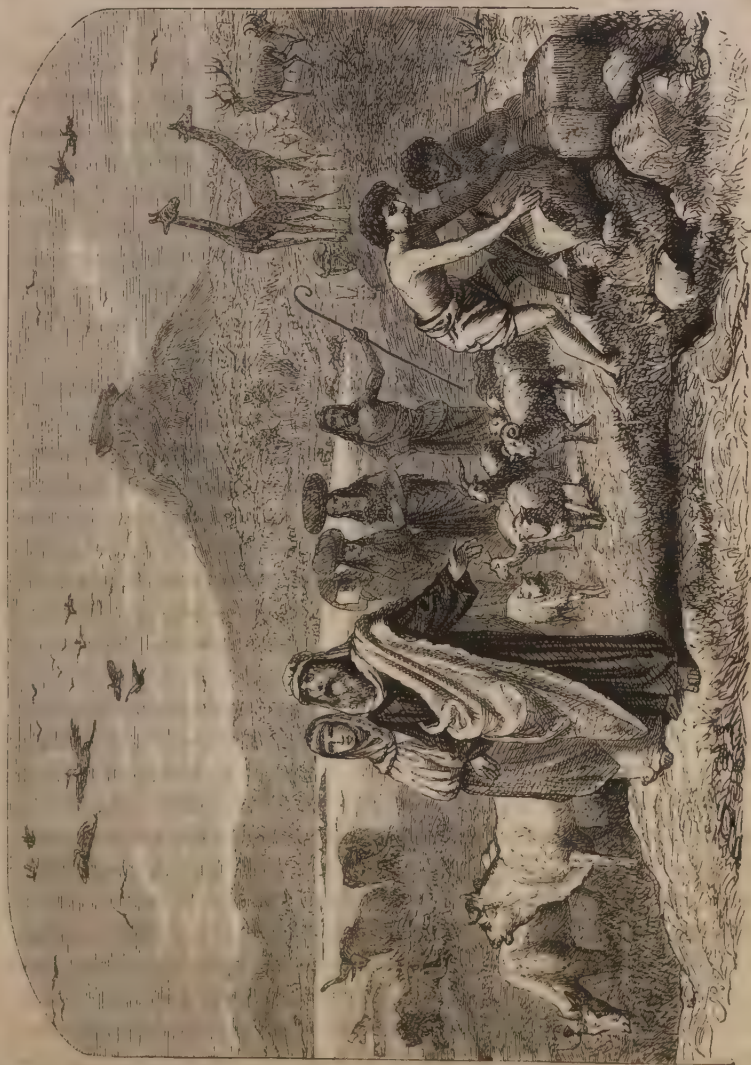


It has been matter of dispute whether the rainbow was called into material existence at the time of the deluge, or whether God accepted and recognized an existing symbol, and consecrated it to a sacramental and a sacred use. Some divines maintain that, as there is no record in Genesis of the appearance of a rainbow before the flood, some great change was made by the fiat of God, that reproduced the rainbow then, and renews the sacred symbol to all generations. This is an extreme view. If there was moisture even in the shape of mist in the days before the flood, a rainbow was possible ; if there was a waterfall, or a running stream, or water welling from the depths of the earth into the air, there must have been incidental rainbows if the sun shone. It is not impossible that the rainbow existed from the beginning, and that God seized an existing phenomenon, and transformed the mere physical and material phenomenon into a significant and sacred symbol for all generations. It was very gracious and good in God thus to minister to Noah. Without it, Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, and their descendants, every time they saw the black cloud careering in the sky, and the lightnings flash from its bosom, or heard the thunder peal reverberating from the everlasting hills, that with bowed and

uncovered heads reverently adored as they heard the voice of God, must have feared that another deluge was about to come upon the earth, by which seed-time and harvest, winter and summer, would be destroyed. The rainbow, therefore, appearing on the bosom of the banks of cloud, amid the peals of the thunder and the flashing lightning, was to every descendant of Noah a visible signal hung forth like a flag from the sky, preaching visibly from the sky what God's Word proclaimed audibly on the earth, "Seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease."

What the rainbow was to Noah—the pledge of the departing storm, and of the appearing sunshine—the Lord's Supper is to us. Our true and great sacrifice has been offered; there is no more sacrifice for sin. By it the poison that infects us has been neutralized, the curse that hangs upon us has been disarmed of its terrors, and, literally, to us there is no condemnation because we are in Christ Jesus. As long as that ordinance is celebrated in the Church below, so long it is a pledge that Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, and therefore to us there is no condemnation, and to us there need be no fear.

This covenant thus made with Noah was altogether irrespective of any desert on his part; for no sooner had the words of it been pronounced from heaven, than Noah fell in sin. So the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is instituted and given, not because of anything meritorious in us. The great fact it points back to with retrospective force—namely, Christ crucified for us—was not something drawn down by our merits, or in testimony to our goodness, but in sovereign love, in spite of the creature's demerit. In the language of God's written Word, "We are saved by grace." Not one enjoyment in the present, not one bright hope in reversion, not a cup of cold water, not a crown of glory, can be given to us on any other ground than this, that Jesus Christ became our sin that we might be



Noah coming out of the Ark.

made his righteousness, and that justified by faith we might have peace with God.

This covenant made with Noah was to him, and is to us, a pledge that seed-time and harvest, and all the earthly blessings which God promised, should continue on the earth until the close of this present economy ; and history proclaims from all its pages, "Thy word, O God, is truth." No universal deluge has swept the earth since, and no universal deluge through water will ever occur again ; not because the law of gravity prevents it, not because there is not water in the ocean to overflow the earth ; but because that beautiful bow, "that spans the sky when storms prepare to part," evermore appears as God's own proclamation that seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat, shall remain to all generations. Heaven and earth may pass away, but that rainbow shall not pass away ; heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or tittle shall not fail from that promise till all be fulfilled.

But why these things, and where is their necessity ? What was the use of a rainbow to Noah when God said it should be so ? What is the use of the sacrament to us when the Bible tells us that Christ died for us ? Scepticism would do away with a symbol, superstition makes a god of it ; the believer accepts the truth, and is comforted, visibly, sensibly comforted by the symbol that seals and points to it.

Were there no sun in the sky, there could be no rainbow in the cloud, girdling tower, and mountain, and town, and tree. Were there no Sun of Righteousness in the spiritual firmament, there could be no salvation for the chiefest of sinners. As there could be no rainbow without a sun, so there can be no redemption without a Redeemer, no salvation without a Saviour. What is every promise, type, parable, miracle, figure, in the Word of God, but scattered, refracted, and reflected rays of the Sun of Righteousness ?

Without the dark cloud there could not be the rainbow. If

there were no dark cloud in the sky to be the background, and no shower pouring from its fleecy bosom, there could be no beautiful rainbow seen by the observer upon earth. Even so, had there been no fall in Paradise, there had been no sunrise upon the earth of that Sun of Righteousness who gilds it with his glory.

This rainbow character of Christianity is peculiar, and exclusively peculiar, to this dispensation. In hell it is all darkness, without light; there is the bank of cloud, without the sun to light it up with brilliant hues, or to reflect from it the rainbow colours. In heaven there is pure light, and no darkness at all; no cloud in its sky, and no rainbow symbol or memorial overarching it. But on earth there is the cloud and the glory, the sunshine and the shadow, the raindrops and the sunbeams.

God in Christ is now revealed to us in rainbow glory. Hence the picture of Christ in the Apocalypse is that of the rainbow-crowned angel, meaning the angel of the covenant. Absolute Deity dwells in light inaccessible; but Christ is Deity dwelling within the limits of manhood; He is God manifest in the flesh, seen of angels, justified in the Spirit, received up into glory.

Every time you gaze into the sky, as the thunder-storm retires, and the sunshine breaks forth in the shower, and see that beautiful bow, it carries you back to the clefts of Ararat, to the world's grey fathers, to one of the earliest and sweetest promises that God Almighty has given to mankind. Chemistry can analyze the cloud, science can explain the secrets of the physical or material phenomenon, but we must guard against thinking the symbol less sacred, less divine, because we can understand its condition, and can explain why it spreads itself so beautifully upon the cloud. To understand and explain the material phenomenon is not less to find God behind it. It is very true that this scientific analysis of everything takes away the mystery that once hung over all, and tends to make men see so much of man, that they fail to see anything of God; and yet,

in the highest science, the science that unveils the mysterious workings of the human frame, its marvellous economy, fearfully and wonderfully made ; the chemistry that explains the constituent elements of compounds that we supposed once to be simple ; the astronomy that brings within our horizon the distant planets, with their satellites, and clusters of stars far, far away in space, seems to a secular mind to disenchant the world of its sacred glory ; but to a thoughtful and a Christian mind it only reveals more and more of the glories and marvels of that God who made all and governs all. And the Christian, in the brilliant discoveries of science, is the very first to cry, in the ecstasy of his feelings, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."



Ararat, the Ark, and the Altar.



T is a very interesting fact, that mountains have been in so many instances selected by God for the sublimest manifestations of Himself. Yet there seems something singularly appropriate in such selection. The grandeur of the everlasting hill, almost inaccessible to mortal footstep—receiving the first rays of the eastern sun, and retaining his last rays as he sinks in the west—listening with uncovered head to the thunder-cloud, and transmitting it in multiplying reverberations to surrounding hills—drinking in the descending rains, and sending them down deepening streams into the glens and lowlands, where they refresh the pastures that rejoice on every side—nursing the impetuous torrents into rivers that wend their way to the ocean, carrying as they go the fleets and navies of the world; these and many other aspects render the selection of a mountain for the descent of the glory of God most expressive and suggestive. The din of this world does not reach its crags, the tainted air that has been the breath of millions does not touch its brow, the very clouds and mists on its bosom do not ascend to its top. Looking down from its glorious pinnacles, cities, churches, towers, and pyramids—all that genius, labour, and time have reared on the bosom of the earth—seem insignificant, as they really are, and heaven, the enveloping heaven, alone appears great.

The mountains are the lasting and indelible memorials of the scenes that have glorified their summits. Temples once vocal with the voices of assembled worshippers have fallen; altars on which hecatombs were offered have been swept away; the temple of God, in which were the cherubim, and the glory, and the mercy-seat, is gone; the streets of Jerusalem lie deep under the *débris* of the capital they once sustained; Thebes, with its gates, Palmyra, with its splendour, Rome, with its Capitol, Corinth, with its luxuries, and the Seven Churches of Asia, have left little more than discussions about their sites. Athens barely exists—a shadowy reminiscence of the city of Plato, and Socrates, and Demosthenes, and Homer.

“Shrine of the mighty! can it be,
That this is all remains of thee?”

But Ararat stands, with its snow-clad peaks, just as it was when the ark rested in one of its cloven rocks, and Noah built on it his sacred altar. Mount Sinai, Pisgah, and Horeb still lift up their everlasting heads. Tabor retains lingering on its brow rays of the glory, as if reluctant to depart; Calvary is still dim under the shadow of its terrible eclipse; and the Mount of Olives seems to hold fast the footprints of the ascended Lord. These are the impressive and imperishable monuments of departed ages, the eloquent witnesses to the grandest events, the everlasting Peniels of mankind.

The first sacred mountain noticed in the Bible is Ararat. It looked down on the rising flood till it was covered with the wrathful waters. It emerged from the waste, the earliest portion of the earth visible to Noah as the deluge subsided. It saw the world all prosperity and peace, “eating, and drinking, and marrying, and giving in marriage, till the flood came and swept them away.” It saw, floating on the tempestuous surges, the dead bodies of men and beasts, the wrecks of cities, the torn-up oaks, and the treasures, wardrobes, and works of a luxurious population, and one solitary

light gleaming through the darkness from the floating house of Noah. At length the ark settled in one of its gorges, and there the forefathers of many generations, the representatives of future millions, gathered round the altar raised by Noah, and offered sacrifice, and service, and eucharistic songs to Him whose mercy had spared them, whose power had protected them.

As Noah ended one world and began another—with sacrifice, and service, and prayer, and praise—so we ought to make all, as they were meant to be by Him who created them, subservient to the highest and the holiest issues. We ought to close each year, and begin its successor, as we would desire to close this life, and to commence the next. Let the last notes of praise in time mingle with the first notes of praise in eternity. Time is the porch of eternity, the pathway to a crown of glory, or to a burning doom of misery and sorrow. He must be blind indeed, who has not seen God's hand sweep along the currents of the years that are gone; and he must be deaf indeed who has not heard his voice upon the right and upon the left, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it;" and he must be hardened who, having closed one year without God, can venture to commence and continue its successor in defiance of God. Beautifully and divinely, then, did Noah end the age that passed away with solemn worship; most appropriately did he enter on an unsounded world, whose ups and downs, and heights and depths, his weary feet were soon to traverse, by imploring God to be with him in the future, and to light it up with the love which had shone on his footsteps in the past, and everywhere and always to wrap him in his paternal and ever-protecting presence.

No doubt the worship of the patriarch consisted much of thanksgiving, adoration, and praise. Ararat was to Noah a standing monument that God's overshadowing wings had been spread over him upon the bosom of the stormy deep, that God's fatherly eye had been fastened upon that family of doubting, desponding, fearing, but



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NOAH'S SACRIFICE AFTER THE DELUGE.

LEIGHTON, BRON.

still safe, voyagers ! The same flood that was the grave of a vast world was the preservation of his little family. Therefore it became him, as a Christian—for such he was—to offer thanksgiving and praise to Him who had kept his eyes from tears, his ark from foundering, and had at length placed him on Ararat, a monument of preserving goodness.

But there was required of Noah more than thanksgiving and praise. His must be Abel's offering. He and his were sinners, and they felt, in the light of a great deliverance, only more deeply that they were so. Noah recollected his sins in the past, his misgivings in the present ; fears he had been the prey of, and despondency and doubt that he had culpably given way to. He recollected how often he had said in his heart, when some huge billow swept past, or some great wave made his frail bark vibrate, and reel, and stagger under the shock, as if his vessel had lost its way, and had begun to founder, " God hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me ;" and said, like the Israelites in another case, " It had been better for me and mine, that we had perished with the rest of the antediluvians in the flood." When he knelt on Ararat, and recollected all his unworthy doubts of God, all his carnal misgivings, his suspicions, and cowardly fears, his first feeling must have been, " I need the cleansing of a blood that will cleanse from all sin ; I need to flee to an atonement in which alone there can be forgiveness for the past, and through which alone I can draw down strength, and peace, and confidence for the future." His atonement is ours ; his faith and ours rest on the same Lamb, slain from before the foundation of the world.

Noah built his altar, and the Lord was pleased with his offering, and said, " I will not again curse the ground any more." It may be literally rendered, " I will not add to curse the ground"—which is the strict translation of the Hebrew ; that is, " I will not inflict an additional curse upon it." And therefore we have the earth, and

the air, and water of the globe exactly the same now as they were immediately after the deluge. We are told, "And the Lord smelled a sweet savour;" that is language appropriate to man, used for our sakes in reference to Deity—"And the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for (or, as it should be rendered, *though*) the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." God saw that it was so before the flood; He saw that the heart was not changed by the flood. And this is "the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us." The flood found man's heart wicked when it came, and left it so when it departed; and so it is with that heart which is brought to the font. Baptism with water does not change the heart; the true baptism is that baptism of the Holy Spirit which gives the answer of a good conscience toward God. "Neither will I again," God added, "smite any more anything living, as I have done;" that is, with a flood of water. "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

These last ordinances settled on Ararat, as summer and winter, and seed-time and harvest, still remain. The decree that fixed them four thousand years ago still lasts. In their stated recurrence the Christian sees that God's Word is the real law of nature, and that what philosophers too often quote as the characteristics of matter, which they think must continue for ever as they were in the beginning, are the simple decrees of God, which He created, and may repeal or suspend at any moment. Nature hangs on the will of God. The long chain of causes and consequences which we see, hangs from a staple fastened in the throne of God. Let us never so far forget these truths as to place creation in the place of the Creator, or material laws in the room of the attributes of God.

The nearer that Noah came to Ararat in his ark, the more the signs multiplied of his approach. He sent out the raven—it left

him. He sent out the dove, and it returned ; and again he sent it out, and it returned with an olive branch in its mouth. His mind thus grew in certainty that the waters were subsiding steadily over all the earth. So as the time of our deliverance from sin and sorrow draws near, God will give signs to his people of his nearing advent, in the increased expectancy that will rise and swell like a sea of peace within them ; in the joyous hopes that will steal like lights into the chambers of the soul, kindled as they are from heavenly altars ; in the sweet sense of communion and reconciliation with God ; in the growing intensity of their looking for Him who will come to them the second time without sin unto salvation ; and in those consolidating spiritual interests, and marshalling of separate forces for that great day of trial, which the world will despise and deny, but which comes nearer and clearer every day.

We are plunging into "that great tribulation." Men's hearts fail them for fear of the things coming on the earth ; wars and rumours of wars break on every ear. But "God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble ; therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the mountains be carried into the sea ; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof : for there is"—as there has been in past times—"a river, the streams of which shall make glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High ; God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved ; God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved ; He uttered his voice, the earth melted : the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Be still, and know that I am God ; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Our Ararat, at the close of this chequered economy, and at the commencement of that "rest which remaineth for the people of

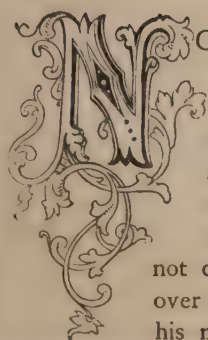
God," will far exceed in beauty, in glory, in safety, in prospect, all that has preceded it in the history of the world. We shall then look back in memory on scenes dim and distant, or dissolved; but no more on a world depopulated and dismantled, such as Noah saw. Our limitless horizon will include all that is peaceful, joyous, and glorious, in which no tears shall fall, no sorrows be felt, no death cast its dark shadow, no controversy disturb, and no bitter passion lodge in a single heart, or cause an unkind word. "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever."





Abraham going forth to the land of Canaan.

Abraham.

O name shines amid the patriarchs with so rich and lasting a lustre as that of Abraham. God selects him in the land of Ur, and gives him a command to leave his country and his kindred, and promises to make his name great, and himself a blessing. Abraham had unwavering confidence in the word of the Almighty. He did not count the difficulties that were obvious, or weep over the ties he must sunder. He received from God his marching order, and "departed as the Lord had spoken to him." One word from God is enough for the believer. In obedience to it, he can face all man fears, and leave behind all man loves. In this submission—heart and soul to the will and word of God—lay the central and governing element in the character of the father of the faithful.

Another very beautiful trait crops up in Abraham. Wherever he halted and pitched his tent, there he raised an altar. Wherever the patriarch went, he felt it alike his duty and his privilege to acknowledge the true and the living God. When the inhabitants of Shinar found a plain that seemed suitable for a permanent abode, they set about building a tower, which they blasphemously said would reach the heavens and defy God; but Abraham, under a far better and purer inspiration, wherever he tarried, thought it no

resting-place or permanent abode, for he pitched a tent, not built a house ; and wherever he pitched his tent for himself, there he raised an altar for the worship of God. Is there not here a rebuke to many Christians, who build, not a tent, as Abraham did, but a house to live in, and, placed amid greater light, are yet content to be without an altar ? Wherever man sojourns, there he should recognize the presence and love, and practise the worship of God. The sequel of this history proves that he whose tent and altar were never separated, felt his happiness increase like a river ; while Lot, as we shall see in the sequel of this story, who went out with Abraham, and pitched his tent, but omitted to raise an altar, lost his family, and almost lost his soul.

Nothing can be more beautiful than the earlier aspect of the conduct of Abraham. He was a light amid surrounding darkness—a Christian in a corrupt and demoralized world. He loved his country and his kindred, but he loved God more. The higher and holier passion displaced the lower, or at least diminished its force ; and Haran and Ur of the Chaldees retreated into the distance as Jerusalem and Canaan, and above them the Heavenly Inheritance, grew in size, in splendour, and in attraction.

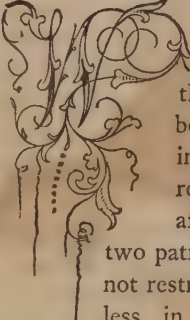
But Abraham was not perfect. The sacred penmen neither exaggerate the virtues, nor conceal the sins, of those whose lives they write. The national prejudice of the Jew does not affect the inspired writer. He who had so promptly obeyed the divine call to come out of his country, unto a land that God would show him, failed, once at least, to trust God in smaller matters. When the famine was in the land, and he went down into Egypt to sojourn, Abraham equivocated sadly, to save himself. Rather than commit his way unto God, we find him bidding Sarah say unto the Egyptians that she was his sister, lest they should take away his life. There was truth in what Abraham said about Sarah, and yet there was falsehood also. He said Sarah was his sister ; this was true, for she was his step-sister.

The suppression of a part of the truth, however, is the suggestion of what is positively false. Though it be quite true that Abraham spoke what was literally true, yet, when he said, "She is my sister," it was meant to imply and suggest, "She is not my wife," in order that thus he might escape from being killed by Pharaoh, should the monarch desire to have her. But Abraham found that his fears respecting the court of Pharaoh were greatly exaggerated by his imagination, and that his sin was as inexpedient as it was wicked. The evils that we fear are often imaginary; and when we take plans that are sinful to avoid those evils, we often plunge into greater calamities. The way of truth and duty is the nearest and best. Abraham's sin has, floating over it, a buoy to warn us off, not a glory encouraging or inviting us to repeat it. It is recorded for our profit. Though forgiven, its record remains in the Bible, a stain on Abraham, a warning to his children.

Many incidents in the life of the Father of the Faithful are narrated for our profit in the sacred record, all full of rich and varied teaching, and possessing undying interest for all who are by faith "his children." We will notice some of the principal as they are presented in Scripture.



Abraham and Lot.



WHEN Abraham went up out of his country, in obedience to the command of God, we are told that Lot went up with him. These patriarchs were both rich men—Abraham “in cattle, in silver, and in gold;” Lot “in flocks, herds, and tents.” They required each a larger acreage than the south could afford. A quarrel arose between the herdmen of the two patriarchs, which the presence of the Canaanites did not restrain. Christian men should not quarrel at all—still less in presence of the enemies of the truth, who watch for opportunities of injuring its claims. But when there arose a quarrel between these two, whether of the two ought to have given way? Abraham was the elder—he might have exacted deference—it was clearly due to him; and Lot was the younger—it was therefore his duty to yield. But who first gave way? The man who built an altar wherever he pitched a tent; while he who built no altar—for there is no record that he did so—where he built a tent, stood up most selfishly, and fought, as he thought, most manfully for his rights. The moment that Abraham saw this, he nobly yielded up all his rights, rather than quarrel before the heathen, and said unto Lot, “Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I





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ABRAHAM AND LOT DIVIDING THE LAND.

LEIGHTON, BRAS.

pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." This is a most beautiful—as it is a most expressive—commentary upon the text, "If any man will have thy cloak, let him have thy coat also." It is not the mere mechanical surrender of the coat to a man who takes by violence your cloak, for that may be done without any Christian feeling at all that exhibits true charity, that exemplifies the Saviour's prescription; but it is the subjection, and, if needs be, surrender, of our own rights, our dearest rights and preferences, in order to promote peace, and put an end to strife injurious to the progress of the gospel, and calculated to minister no good to the edifying of any. Abraham, the greatest Christian, the elder of the two, who might have exacted all, freely surrendered and gave up all, and thereby showed in his conduct the finest specimen of Christian principle and of Christian courtesy.

If Lot had had the courtesy and the Christian feeling of Abraham—if he had been what he ought to have been—he would have been moved and subdued by so heavenly a manifestation of overcoming evil with good; and in prostrate humility he would have sunk to the earth before Abraham, and have said, "This is too much, I did not expect it." But he did not even thank him, so rude was he; he did not give up the best part of the land, so grasping was he. He clutched all he could exact, and gave his uncle no thanks for his goodness. In the words of the narrative, "Lot lifted up his eyes"—not to thank Abraham, not to thank God for giving him such an uncle and such a friend—"and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar."

Lot seized on this fertile plain just because it was fertile—postponing every religious and moral consideration. Separated from Abraham, he diverged farther and farther from what was right, till

at length we find him dwelling in "the cities of the plain." We shall discover as we proceed how fatal was Lot's decision, and how safe is the course prescribed by the Saviour—"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."

Abraham adopted the path of principle, and prospered in his way; Lot accepted the path of profit, pleasure, and expediency, and nearly lost his soul, and otherwise reaped so bitter fruits, and tasted so deeply of sorrow, that he died a broken-hearted man. God, even then and there, honoured Abraham for his acting in this way; for the Lord appeared unto Abraham, who had made so munificent a sacrifice, and said unto him, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." Abraham had given up his temporal right, and God repeats to him the pledge of an eternal inheritance. He surrendered the place that was well watered before the Lord, and God comforts him by the sure prospect of a better land, a brighter city, and a more enduring and happy rest. God adds also, "And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered." This promise remains yet to be fulfilled. The Jew has a right to Canaan, and Canaan a right to the Jew. It is theirs by ancient title-deeds, and it will be theirs very soon in actual possession. I cannot think that after God used the words, "I will give it to thy seed for ever," that all He meant was a few hundred years' possession.

If we be Christ's, we are also Abraham's children, and heirs of the promises.

What a specimen of courtesy was Abraham's conduct! What a proof of Christian meekness! What evidence that, when the heart is right in the sight of God, the life will be all kindness in reference to man!

The further we read in the history of Abraham, the more

brilliantly does his noble character shine forth. Lot had treated the courteous and self-sacrificing proposals of Abraham with so selfish and so decided contempt, that he could reasonably expect no more kindnesses from his uncle. But an incident occurs which tests the feelings of Abraham. Sodom and Gomorrah, we gather from some allusions in the early chapters of Genesis, were two prosperous commercial capitals. Lot chose the plain of Sodom because it was well watered, fruitful in its soil ; and he selected it, not on account of its religion, but its commercial advantages and its agricultural value. Certain kings could see the same advantages that Lot saw ; and they resolved to make war upon Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of the precious spoils that they contained. We find Lot was in the midst of Sodom. He chose it, in spite of its wickedness, because of its riches ; and the issue of a choice made in the face of the will of God was, that he lost his religion, and lost his profits and capital together ; for, we are told, these kings "took Lot, Abraham's brother's son, and his goods, and departed."

Abraham, when he heard that Lot was taken captive, might have said, and Lot deserved it, "He made his bed, let him lie in it ; he took the choice, and he must take the consequences of it ; he went to Sodom against what right principle and ordinary courtesy dictated, let him now reap, as is his due, the bitter fruits of what he has done." That is too often man's way, but it was not Abraham's way ; for the instant he heard that his ungrateful nephew, Lot, was taken captive by a barbarous and cruel people, unsolicited, unselfish, and forgetful of Lot's past conduct, he determined, at all hazards, to rescue him. God prospered Abraham in his generous effort, and delivered these kings into his hand, so that he brought back all the goods, and also Lot himself—by whom, however, this warning seems to have been unheeded ; for he must have again sought his rest in the midst of guilty Sodom, only to be delivered from its coming doom by angels' hands, so dead was he to the

claims of God, so strong a hold had this world obtained over his affections.

Let us learn here the truth—the best that we can carry anywhere: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these (other) things shall be added unto you.” You can little tell how sweet the other things will taste, when you have the consciousness that you sought, not them, but the kingdom of God and his righteousness first. But if you take Lot’s plan, and set out to seek the other things first, and the kingdom of God last, you will either miss the other things, or, if you get them, you will find there is no enjoyment in them without Him, who sanctifies the greatest prosperity, and sweetens the cup of the bitterest adversity.



Abraham and Melchisedek.



N episode, very interesting and suggestive, occurs on Abraham's return with rescued Lot. He was met by Melchisedek, king of Salem, the priest of the Most High God, who brought forth bread and wine, and blessed him, and said, "Blessed be Abraham of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the Most High God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave Abraham tithes of all." The Douay, or Roman Catholic, translation renders these words: "And Melchisedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine: *for* he was the priest of the Most High God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abraham." The note appended to this chapter is: "Here we have the figure and the type of the mass. Melchisedek being a high priest, did a priestly act in bringing forth bread and wine, and offering up the bread and wine as a sacrifice to God." In our translation it is, "Melchisedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine: *and* he was the priest of the Most High God." In the Douay translation it is implied that the bringing forth bread and wine was a priestly or sacrificial act. In our translation it is taught that the bringing forth bread and wine was a hospitable act—a refreshment to a weary and way-worn warrior. Our translation is true to the

Hebrew ; the Romish is wholly unjustifiable. There is here no type, or hint, or prophecy of the sacrifice of the mass.

Who was this Melchisedek? Some of the fathers think he was an angel, some Enoch, and some the Son of God. It appears almost certain that he was merely a type or prefiguration of the Saviour. St. Paul says he had "neither father nor mother;" that is, his descent was not given in the national records, as was that of the priests of Levi. He had "neither beginning nor end of days;" that is, there is no record when he began, and at what age he ended, his priesthood. His name means king of righteousness; and as king of Salem he was king of peace. Our great High Priest, as God, had no mother, and, as man, had no father. His priesthood, unlike that of Aaron, is untransferable—derived from no predecessor, and transmitted to no successor. Christ, corresponding to Melchisedek, was King of Righteousness. The name *Melchisedek* means king of righteousness; the name *Melchi-salem* is king of peace. Christ is both. The historical prefiguration was a king of righteousness and a king of peace: Christ is really what Melchisedek was nominally. Christ, King of Righteousness, is so called expressly by the prophet—"the Lord our Righteousness." He is to us the righteousness which God requires; He is made unto us righteousness. God gives heaven only to perfect righteousness; such righteousness is not *in* us, nor *of* us, nor *by* us; it is external to us—it is Christ our Righteousness. Jesus took my place, obeyed my law, which I had neither power nor inclination to obey; and in virtue of what He did, and of what He is, I receive the reward I forfeited, and enter the heaven I could not otherwise reach. I am justified before God by Him who was made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

But not only is He *Melchisedek*, King of Righteousness, but also *Melchi-salem*, or King of Peace. Christ is not only our peace, but He bestows upon us the peace we need. Man by nature is at war



The Destruction of Sodom.

with God, and at war with himself; so much so, that there never can be peace in his heart until the Prince of Peace takes possession of it, and rules and reigns over every faculty and affection of it. These two blessings are inseparable. We cannot have Jesus as King of Peace, unless we have received Him first as King of Righteousness. None can enjoy in his heart true peace unless he rests in faith upon the only righteousness. Wherever contention revels, there is want of righteousness; wherever there is true righteousness, there is the basis of real and lasting peace. "Justified by faith," says the Apostle Paul, "we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ." Only where righteousness and truth are can the peace that passeth understanding keep our hearts and minds continually. The tree of peace strikes its roots in the crevices of the everlasting Rock; it grows securely from that Rock, and spreads around its cool shadow in the sunshine, and makes sweet music in the storm, and is to every believer as the shadow of a great rock, and fruit of refreshment in a weary and a parched land. Wherever the Lord Jesus Christ, a believer's Righteousness, reigns, there, as its counterpart, will flourish Christ's peace—the peace that passeth understanding.

These two offices subserve each other; the priestly office opened Christ's way to the royal dignity, and the throne of Christ has its foundation laid in his atoning blood. On the other hand, the kingly office subserves the priestly office. Christ conquers by his power as a king those whom He has purchased by his blood as a great High Priest. As a priest, He delivers us from the curse and the guilt of sin; as a king, He relieves us from the power and the dominion of sin. By his sacrifice as a priest, He restores us to the divine favour; by his sceptre as a king, He creates within us the divine image. If Jesus were not our Priest, we should lie under the curse; if He were not our King, we should lie under the power and the dominion of sin.

We must not separate these two offices in our appreciation of

the blessed Redeemer. Some take Christ as a Priest, or profess to do so, but refuse Him as a King. They will kiss the cross, but will reject the sceptre; they will go to Him for pardon, but they will not apply to Him for purity. They want to have a title for heaven, that they may be happy, but they do not wish to have a fitness for heaven by being made holy. Most readily will they lay themselves at the foot of the cross, if peradventure they may obtain forgiveness there; but most reluctantly will they place themselves beneath the jurisdiction of his sceptre, that they may receive sanctity there. Others, again, do just the opposite; they reject Christ as the Priest, and they take Him as a King. They say, "Christianity is full of beautiful lessons; it is fitted to make good subjects, good husbands, good wives, and obedient children;" and they draw near to Christ, and say, "Lord, Lord," recognizing Him as a great Teacher, a grand King, and the Author of the purest moral precepts ever breathed into the air of society; but they refuse to believe on Him as the only Sacrifice, the only Priest. It cannot be so; we must take Christ as He is set forth in the gospel, or we can have nothing to do with Him at all. We may fancy that we can hold by his cross while we refuse his sceptre, or that we can lie down beneath the shadow of his throne while we shrink from the atonement on the altar; but we cannot really thus act, we only fancy that we do so. If we accept Him as the Priest who pardons, we must accept Him as the King who teaches—King over every thought, passion, feeling, and motive in our hearts. We accept and glory in the true Melchisedek, as our Priest and King, our Atonement and Law, our all and in all.

The shadow that crossed the path of Abraham has passed away; but the glorious One who died upon the cross, and reigns in heaven, and will return again to earth, endureth for ever. Our hearts are now directed, not to these, but from these to Him who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that

believeth—who exhausted every type, fulfilled every prophecy, glorified every law, and now lives in heaven, to carry out on earth the victories of the cross—the purchase of his blood, the objects of his love.

“Th’ atoning work is done,
The Victim’s blood is shed,
And Jesus now is gone,
His people’s cause to plead :
He stands in heav’n, their Great High Priest,
And bears their names upon his breast.

“He sprinkles with his blood
The mercy-seat above ;
For justice hath withstood
The purposes of love :
But justice now objects no more,
And mercy yields her boundless store.

“No temple made with hands
His place of service is ;
In heaven itself He stands,
A heavenly priesthood his :
In Him the shadows of the law
Are all fulfilled, and now withdraw.

“And though awhile He be
Hid from the eyes of men,
His people look to see
Their Great High Priest again :
In brightest glory He will come,
And take his waiting people home.”



Abraham and Sarah.



ONE day, after Abraham's interview with Melchisedek, a vision broke upon his soul. God introduced Himself to Abraham, the father of the faithful, and his own obedient and believing servant, in a vision. "God, who at sundry times," says the apostle, in the patriarchal, the Levitical, and prophetic dispensations, and in "divers manners," by dreams, by visions, spake to our fathers, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son; so that we are to look for God's will manifested to us, no more in visions or in dreams, but only in the written page of his own holy word. It is there final and complete. In the midst of the vision, Abraham heard these comforting words, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Abraham availed himself of God's presence in this bright Apocalypse to beg to be made the father of the faithful. God had given Abraham the promise that his children should be countless as the sands by the sea-shore, and that a great and illustrious family should spring from him. Abraham, not doubting the fact, but not seeing how that fact could come to pass, hesitated and queried, as is often the case with us; for we, too, believe that a thing will be, but we stagger because we cannot see how the thing will be; whereas we ought to feel, what Abraham should have felt—for, believer as he was, he was not a perfect believer—that the God who has promised the result will, in

his own way, in his own time, and by his own instruments, accomplish that result.

The reason that made Abraham ask the question, "How?" was, that he had no heir, no son born to him, and there was only Eliezer of Damascus, whom he might adopt; and thus, through an adopted son, and not from his own, literally might spring that family that should be countless as the sand on the sea-shore, and the stars in the firmament.

God brought the patriarch forth, and bade him raise his eyes to the shining firmament, and said, "Tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. So shall thy seed be." Abraham's faith rose above the level of the laws of nature, and believed the word and power of the Law-maker, and "the Lord counted it to him for righteousness." God confirmed and nourished Abraham's faith by visible signs and tokens, and renewed his promise of the "land from the river of Egypt unto the great river Euphrates."

At another time, God appeared again to Abraham—the account of which we find in the 18th chapter of Genesis. This chapter is a beautiful combination or collection of pictures—a sort of picture-gallery. It opens with one truly ancient and Eastern in its aspect. It is mid-day; the sultriness of the sunbeams is intolerable; the air within the tent is heated, and almost unfit for being breathed. The aged patriarch, grey with the snows of a hundred years, is seated on the threshold of his Arab tent, enjoying the fresh breeze that swept by; and, no doubt, also prepared to show the rites of hospitality, according to ancient habits, to all strangers and pilgrims who might pass. Whilst he sat there, three men—apparently so, two of them really angels—passed, or, rather, drew near to his tent. Abraham, with true Eastern hospitality, entertained them; and after they had partaken of the food which he prepared, one—evidently showing that he was more than a mere angel, even the angel of the covenant—said—without naming the personage—"I will certainly

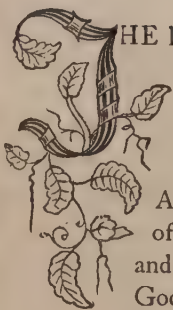
return unto thee ; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son." When this promise was made, Sarah overheard it through the curtains of the tent, and laughed ; and laughed so loudly, that the echoes of her laughter reached the ears of those who talked with Abraham. Sarah laughed at the absurdity. She could not raise her belief higher than law—forgetting that Omnipotence can accomplish what truth predicts. One of the three who appeared to Abraham solved every difficulty in these words : "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Sarah's laugh of scepticism was a sin, and remains a blot in her history.

But whilst Sarah's great defects are mentioned, one would wish to remember that she was not without great excellences. The Apostle Peter, referring to this very occasion, speaks of Sarah in terms of great praise. In the 3rd chapter of the 1st Epistle of Peter, addressing wives, he says, "Be in subjection to your own husbands ; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives. Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel ;" let not that be their pride ; "but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner, in the old time, the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands, even as Sarah obeyed Abraham (alluding to this very incident), calling him lord ; whose servants ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement ;" that is, not being afraid, losing one's balance, one's self-possession, by some sudden shock of terror or alarm, but cultivating those principles and practices which are alike the strength, ornament, and beauty of the Christian character.

Sarah lived long enough to repent of her sins, and to adopt, in thought and life, the more excellent way. Her last days seem to

have been her loveliest ; the clouds that gathered round her morning sun, after it had passed the meridian, parted and disappeared, and the sun of her life set softly and sweetly in the valley of Mamre, and amid the oaks that grew there, rich in promise, luminous, and glorious. In some Christians, character shines most beautiful in youth ; in others, it breaks forth in its greatest lustre in old age. The bleak spring is often followed by a bright and lovely autumn. The seeds sown in youth by pious hands, covered up in manhood, not unfrequently grow into fruits of righteousness and peace in old age. In order to judge of Sarah, and of every one of Sarah's daughters, we must look at character as a whole, and not in incidental traits and details. There is some fragment in every man's biography that will not bear the microscope, and therefore we should not look to it alone as the test and criterion of the man. Sarah was harsh in her treatment of Hagar ; she equivocated with her husband in Egypt ; she laughed contemptuously at the Divine promise. Such sins the Bible neither conceals nor palliates. But, on the other hand, what can exceed her perfect submission when she learned that her son, her only son Isaac, was about to be sacrificed ? It is impossible to suppose that Sarah did not know of Abraham's and Isaac's going early away that morning. We cannot suppose she did not see the faggots, and the knife, and the means of fire, and all the preparation of sacrifice ; nor is it probable that Abraham, who had made her his confidant in many things and on many occasions, failed to make her his confidant in this dread and mysterious act of sacrifice. But there was not one whisper of rebellion breathed by Sarah ; she was silent and submissive. She had now learned to trust where she could not see, and to wait where she could not work, and to hope where she would have scoffed before. Her silence is evidence of excellence. No character on earth is without a flaw. Let us not deny the sins that defile, but let us not conceal the virtues that adorn.

Abraham and Hagar.



HE life of the Father of the faithful had its shadows as well as its sunshine.

Sarah gave bad advice to her husband, and he was weak enough to accept it. Sarah believed God's promise that a child should spring from Abraham, which should be in the lineage and family of Him who was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel ; but she confounded God's promise with God's precepts—not a very just, but very frequent confusion. She did not believe it possible that she should be the mother of the promised son ; and therefore, lest the promise should fail, she gave Hagar, her bondmaid, to her husband to wife. God gives a promise that this or that shall be, and foolishly and unwarrantably we too often set ourselves to fulfil it ; and in trying to fulfil God's promises, with which we have no direct business, we forget God's precepts, which are the declarations of those duties that really devolve upon us. Sarah, under the idea that she was honouring God, and helping Him to fulfil a promise, forgot express precepts, or at least subordinated real and great duties to supposed ones, and violated a plain commandment, in order, as she thought, to help the Almighty to carry out one of his ancient promises. Let us not forget, that when God gives a promise, it is his prerogative, not ours, to fulfil it.

When Sarah saw that Hagar had conceived, she found she was despised in her bondwoman's eyes, and therefore she blamed Abraham: "The Lord judge between thee and me." Abraham replied, "Behold, the maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee." Sarah "dealt so hardly with her," that "she fled from her face."

Polygamy—or, rather, bigamy—was followed then, as it is now, by disastrous results. Sarah, after recommending a culpable expedient, was betrayed into expressions of impiety, undutifulness to Abraham, and cruelty to Hagar. These facts are recorded to show us that polygamy, in this early instance, instead of being a blessing, proved a curse. And such it has ever been.

After this, the angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar, driven forth by her mistress into the wilderness. This expression, "Angel of the Lord" occurs very frequently in the Old Testament, and is, literally translated from the Hebrew, "Angel Jehovah," or, "sent Jehovah." Jesus said, "God hath *sent* his only-begotten Son." The inference is, that this angel of the Lord was none other than our blessed Lord, in some created form, before He became man. That this being was greater than a created angel is obvious from what he said to Hagar: "And the angel of the Lord said unto her, return to thy mistress, and submit thyself unto her hands;" "And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude"—the very language addressed elsewhere to Abraham by God; "And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael, because the Lord hath heard thy affliction." This angel, therefore, was not a created being, but the uncreated Jehovah. He requires her to return to her mistress, as was her duty, from whom she had escaped without warrant; and then he predicted the character of that son that shall be born to her, and of his descendants—that he should be, literally translated, "a wild ass man," like the

wild ass of the desert, untamed and untameable. A picture of this animal is found in Job xxxix. 5: "Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass? whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwelling. He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing."

The modern Arabs and Bedouins are the lineal descendants of Ishmael, and in their life, customs, and habits, they fulfil the prophecy of Ishmael. It is a fact at this day, that the wilderness is the dwelling-place of the descendants of Ishmael. They do not, like other races, form cities. The Arab of to-day is the same that he has been for three thousand years. He will not be associated with civilization—he will not accept the offers that are given by his brethren—he will not leave his patriarchal desert—he has literally his hand against every man, because he lives by spoil, and every man's hand against him, because his extermination is the only safety of contiguous society—he is the "wild ass man," living in the desert upon the scanty pasturage, and yet satisfied. What proofs do modern facts give, that holy men of old wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost? Now, is it possible to suppose that, if Moses were an uninspired writer, he could have made so lucky a guess? Is it possible that he could have given a minute description of an event a thousand years remote, which should be fulfilled, not in the mass, but literally, strictly verbatim fulfilled?

Hagar's beautiful reply to the Angel Jehovah, who gave this prediction respecting her son and his descendants, was, "Thou, God, seest me." Her descendants are also seen by Him—the day of their enlightenment comes. The Sun of Righteousness will also rise on them with healing in his wings.

"Thou, God, seest me" is the great practical prescription for being religious, not in the sanctuary only, but everywhere. Forget



Hagar and Ishmael.

not this thought. May the Holy Spirit write it upon our inmost hearts. May it haunt us, if wicked, until we be what we should be ; and if we are God's children, may it be ever like a sweet under-strain, full of melody, sanctifying, sustaining, comforting, until faith shall be lost in fruition, and the conviction of the truth in the realization of it.

Not the least precious thought in our experience is, that the God who sees us is not a sin-avenging God, from whom we are to shrink, but a Father so loving, that He gave Christ to die for us, to whom we are warranted instantly to run. The natural impression of God is, that He is an angry, an offended, and an avenging Being, in thinking of whom atheism must be our comfort, "no God" must be our instinctive wish ; but so long as we know that God so loves us, that, as the evidence of that love, He gave Christ to die for us, we see in Him, not an avenging Being, but a Father whose presence is not pain but pleasure ; and the 139th Psalm comes to us as the expression of our dearest and our deepest emotion. Do not argue, "God sees us, therefore how terrible," but, "God is our Father, therefore how delightful that He sees us." Let us begin the day with "Our Father," and see all things in the light of that.

What a consolation must Hagar's cry be to a Christian in the midst of trouble and affliction ! There is not a sting planted in the human heart that God sees not. There is not a sorrow that sweeps its shadow over the human conscience God does not see. And when all God's billows sweep over us, when a sense of solitude seizes us, as the bubbles we pursued and thought to be prizes burst and disappear, and we feel indeed desolate, and the conviction cleaves to our souls with greater force than ever, "This is not our rest," "we are pilgrims and strangers," how refreshing to be able to lift up our eyes and our hearts to God, and to feel, however sore the sting, however heavy the wave that breaks over us, however overwhelming

the trial that overtakes ; yet, blessed thought, nothing can hide me from God—"Thou, God, seest me !"

In heavenly love abiding,
No change my heart shall fear ;
And safe is such confiding,
For nothing changes here.
The storm may roar without me,
My heart may low be laid,
But God is round about me—
And can I be dismayed ?

Wherever He may guide me,
No want shall turn me back ;
My Shepherd is beside me,
And nothing can I lack :
His wisdom ever waketh,
His sight is never dim—
He knows the way He taketh,
And I will walk with Him.

Green pastures are before me,
Which yet I have not seen ;
Bright skies will soon be o'er me,
Where the dark clouds have been.
My hope I cannot measure,
My path to life is free,
My Saviour has my treasure,
And He will walk with me.



*A*bram altered into *A*braham.

OD, amid promises rich and varied, told Abram, "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham, for a father of many nations have I made thee."

The first name of the patriarch consists of two syllables—*Ab*, "a father," and *ram*, "high." The second name, Abraham, is composed of *Abram-Hamon*, that is, "high father of a multitude;" and for convenience it is abbreviated into Abraham. This change of name, which began with Abraham, was made a mark of Divine favour, and frequently occurs in Scripture; and one cannot understand it, except it be as a memorial or a memento of the special event which occurred when that change took place, or of the great truth which that change was meant to shadow and show forth. In every age, God has not been satisfied with merely revealing to man an abstract truth; He has always incorporated with it some material, visible, or palpable memento. Thus, when they crossed the river, the stones erected were to be a memorial. Then, in the New Testament Church, in which we worship in spirit and in truth, two sacraments, or symbolical rites, have been established, not only because God saw that more were not necessary, and that less would not do, but also that these two were suggestive, commemorative, and instructive to man.

We read, on a subsequent occasion, that "Jacob," or "Yacob," was changed into "Israel," because he was a man that had power with God. We read again in the New Testament of Cephas turned into Petros; and we read of Saul the persecutor changed into Paul the apostle; evidently to bring before those individuals the events, or the facts, out of which the change of their names originated, and to be constantly before them, a pledge of what they should be. In Isaiah we read, "Thou shall be called by a new name;" in Revelations, "He that overcometh, I will write on him my new name."

The sacred narrative of Abraham's life, so marvellous and so instructive, is no mere human tradition. It is referred to constantly by the inspired writers of the New Testament, and by our Lord Himself.

Christians do not need any evidence of the truth of the Mosaic history from heathen sources. But it may interest the reader to learn, that there are allusions to Egyptian customs and rites in the sacred history which show that Moses describes what actually existed.

It has been objected by some, that Abraham could not have been welcomed to the court of Pharaoh, as stated in the Book of Genesis seeing, as recorded in the same book, and otherwise confirmed, shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians. The answer is decisive. The monuments prove that there were at that time two contemporaneous dynasties in Egypt—one in Lower, the other in Upper Egypt. The Pharaoh of Lower Egypt formed an alliance with the people of Canaan, and expelled the upper dynasty. The upper and expelled dynasty, however, tells the story of their expulsion; and, in doing so, it denounces the Lower Egyptians as foreigners, and the rulers of the Delta, or Lower Egypt, as shepherd kings. Now, it was at the court of Lower Egypt that Abraham was received; and therefore the monumental records of the facts of the case thus far agree with the incidents of Abraham's visit to Egypt.

The monuments say Pharaoh was the generic term of the kings of Egypt in the days of Abraham. This name is also given to them in Scripture. The Scripture, too, speaks of Pharaoh giving Abraham men-servants and women-servants. The monuments of that day prove that slaves existed in Egypt; and on some monuments we see the representation of a mistress beating her slave with a rod, because the slave had incurred her displeasure. The Scripture states there was a famine in Canaan in the days of Abraham. How, it may be asked, could there be a famine in Canaan, not very far distant, while there is shown to have been plenty in Egypt? The answer is, the condition of the two countries warrants the distinction. Canaan depended upon its rains; and if they ceased to fall, it was all over with its crops. Egypt, on the other hand, depended for its fertility on the Nile; and thus, in the same year, there might be plenty in Egypt, whilst there was famine in Canaan.

Again, Sarah is said to be very fair. The Nubians and Ethiopians were all very dark—the Egyptians less so; but the people of Mesopotamia, of which Sarah was a native, were almost as white as Europeans.

It is said, in Genesis, Pharaoh saw the princess Sarah. This seems, at first, an incidental and worthless remark, but it has suggested the objection of historical inaccuracy, seeing that Eastern women universally veiled their faces. But the Egyptians, it is known, formed a great exception; and Sarah, accustomed in her own land to wear a veil, with a good sense worthy of that illustrious princess, in things indifferent conformed to the customs of the country, whilst we believe, in things essential she held fast to the religion of the God of Abraham.

These illustrative facts are most important. They prove to the school of Colenso that Moses not only taught the way to heaven, as the gospels inform us, but that all he has stated in his pictures of men, in his sketches of events, in his references to Egypt, in his

portraits of character, in his history of incidents, and acts, and revolutions, is historically true ; that all his writings are, from beginning to end, what our reformers, and our confessors, and articles declare—canonical Scriptures, preaching Christ, and teaching the way to the Father.

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy Holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.



Abraham pleading for the Cities of the Plain.



AFTER the angels had partaken of Abraham's hospitality, and the promise that Sarah should have a son had been renewed by One who was more than an angel, God unfolds to Abraham the fearful punishment which was to befall the guilty cities of the plain. Not less wonderful than the condescension of God in thus revealing his purposes to his servant, is the reason which is assigned by God Himself for his so doing. "Shall I hide from Abraham this thing that I do? for I know him that he will command his children and his household after him." What

an honour to Abraham! What an encouragement to godly parents to train up their children and conduct their households aright!

When God indicated to Abraham what He was about to do, Abraham drew near to God, and prayed in the expressive litany which we have in Gen. xviii. It is the most beautiful interceding prayer in the Old Testament. So much of reverential awe, filial boldness, earnest sympathy, melt and mingle in it, that I know, indeed, nothing in the whole Old Testament Scripture that approaches it. Jesus wept over the approaching doom of Jerusalem. Abraham, in the spirit of Jesus, groaned at the certain catastrophe of Sodom, and anticipating that catastrophe every moment, he felt for it as if it had been his own life. and cried with a fervour, an

intensity, a boldness, and an awe, that present to us the most perfect and beautiful model in the Old Testament Scriptures of Christian devotion.

We are told in the narrative:—"And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt Thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. And Abraham answered and said, Behold, now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous; wilt Thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And He said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it. And he spake unto Him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And He said, I will not do it for forty's sake. And he said unto him, Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And He said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there. And he said, Behold, now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake. And he said, Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And He said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake. And the Lord went his way, as soon as He had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place."

Sodom occupied a very pleasant site, surrounded by streams, with prosperous manufactures, extensive commerce, and traffic with surrounding districts. It was a populous and prosperous capital;

but all this did not preserve or defend it. Sin proved its ruin and its shame. The same element that left Sodom to the flames will destroy any nation in which it finds a lodging, and a sphere to act in. Not only does sin vitiate the springs of social life, and disorganize and waste down the strength, life, ornament, and glory of a land, but it cries to heaven for vengeance, and demands on it an exhibition of the justice of God, which earth cannot do without. Sin in a nation is armed with two destructive characteristics—an inner power, and an outer effect. By its inner power, it exhausts the nation's life, and undermines its stability and vigour; and by its outer power, it exacts from the justice of God those judgments which sin invariably inflicts on its victims.

Abraham's prayer on this occasion assumed that pious and righteous men, in the midst of a city, are elements of its safety. It is the good, however humble their condition, that God counts when He reckons up the ornaments and measures the strength of a nation. These are the salt of the earth, the shields that cover a city, and the bulwarks of a nation.

Abraham prayed with humility, and fervour, and yet with boldness. His humility on this occasion was only equalled by the great boldness with which he prayed. There is an invitation in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace," which may be rendered much more correctly, "Let us come freely and with boldness of utterance to the throne of grace." When Abraham first drew near to God, he was very humble, almost depressed; but when he saw Jesus at the right hand of God, he spoke with that boldness which is one of the best, and not least reverent, characteristics of his prayer. His humility was drawn from a sight of God contrasted with himself; his boldness was drawn from his faith in Jesus ever living to make intercession for him.

There was also displayed great persistency in this prayer. Abraham did not say, "If there be fifty in Sodom, wilt thou spare it?"

and when God said, "I will," cease speaking; but he asked down and down to the very minimum—which, in his ignorance, he thought was the lowest, but which did not exhaust the inexhaustible mercy of God. Abraham pleaded, at first, if God should find fifty righteous men in the midst of it, would He spare it? Abraham judged more charitably of Sodom than Sodom deserved. He thought it surely could not be so bad, as not to have at least fifty good men in the midst of it; and God at once acceded, and answered, that if there were fifty such in the midst of it, He would spare it. When Abraham heard God accede to his prayer, which he had offered in the exercise of filial boldness, and yet with great reverence—that if there were fifty in it, He would spare it, he made the favour which God granted the basis on which he offered up another petition; and therefore pleaded for its deliverance if there should be found thirty in the midst of it; and, lastly, if there were found ten. And what makes this scene more touching, is the fact that Abraham felt ashamed to ask for safety for the sake of a still less number, and left off asking before God left off granting. Perhaps, if he had said, "Peradventure there shall be found two righteous in the midst of it," God would have said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of two." At all events, it was not God who left off giving, it was Abraham who left off asking.

But Sodom and Gomorrah perished, and the dreary Dead Sea covers all their glory. The city was not spared, but we learn the terms on which it would have been spared—if ten righteous had been found in the midst of it. But another part of Abraham's prayer was granted—the righteous escaped. And how many were righteous in it? Only one! and that one how flawed! how mutilated! how injured, by the contamination of his guilty residence! What a brand plucked almost consumed from the burning, was poor Lot! And yet, with all his faults, so great, so grievous, so defacing, God could not destroy guilty Sodom as long as that frail, torn, blighted, yet living flower blossomed in the midst of it.



"And Isaac said, Where is the lamb for a burnt offering."—GEN. xxii. 17.

Lot.

LOT'S whole subsequent life was determined by his ungodly decision. The history of Lot is that of a Christian sinking in estrangement from God, till he trembles on the very brink of final ruin. The earliest symptom of degeneracy in the life of Lot is indicated in the recorded fact, that Abraham raised his altar wherever he pitched his tent, and called on the name of the Lord ; but nothing of this is said of Lot. The presumption is, that Abraham kept up private, family, and public communion with God ; and the almost certain inference is, that Lot left off doing so. Wherever Abraham pitched his tent, he raised his altar ; but Lot was so busy in raising and pitching and adorning his tent, that he ignored or forgot the altar. Hence, the commencement of his downward career, to the world so imperceptible, was his ceasing to pursue a practice essential to the life, and safety, and perseverance of a child of God. Lot accommodated his religion to his circumstances ; Abraham accommodated all circumstances to his religion.

Lot did not originally intend to go into Sodom, but to remain at a distance from it. The selection he made seems to indicate the existence of religious feelings drawing him back from Sodom, and yet worldly feelings dragging him into Sodom. He split the difference, as the world would call it ; he balanced the two. "He

lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well-watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abraham dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain"—that is, the small surrounding villages—"and pitched his tent," not in Sodom, he had still conscience enough to keep him out of it, but "toward Sodom." He tried to enjoy Sodom in the distance, and strengthen his intimacy with all that was going on, and keep his faith and add to his fortune and all without apostacy. Into it, at first, he would not go, for there was no fear of God there; but from it he would not go, because there was no way of making his wealth so rapidly elsewhere. He tried to balance his love of money and his love of God. His anxiety to be rich was so great, that he pitched his tent, not at a distance from Sodom, as conscience urged—not in Sodom, as passion said—but in the well-watered plains toward Sodom, as this compromise prescribed. In the moral world, leave the line that is right, and you do not know where you may stop. So Lot eventually learned. By and by, we find him in the very heart of Sodom; his daughters trained with culpable carelessness to love the finery and follies of Sodom, to forget the altar of Abraham, and finally married to some of the abandoned young men of the city; not marrying in the Lord, as Abraham's children did, but after their own fancy. At last they became sources of the intensest misery to Lot, vexing his righteous soul, and bringing ruin on themselves. Nor was this all. His wife became infected with the wickedness of the place, though she seemed to be a child of God. In God's providential mercy, she was told to flee from Sodom, and escape for her life; but her heart was so deeply in it, that she looked back, and lingered, and was fixed, by the judgment of God, into a permanent monumental evidence of God's anger, and

of the folly of leaving the heart in the world, while men dream that the escape of the body is enough. The evil heart of unbelief furnished Lot's worldly wife with many excuses. She could not believe in her heart that God would destroy so beautiful a capital, that He would crush so busy and industrious a population, quench its gay splendours, terminate its brilliant career, and number with things that were a city that was the admiration of all.

Whilst Lot was one day seated at the gate of Sodom, he saw strangers come; and with the characteristic feeling of Orientals, and more especially of ancient Orientals, he offered them all the privileges of hospitality and entertainment. It is worthy of remark, that the reply of the angels on this occasion was different from what it was to Abraham—very different. When Abraham asked the angels to come in, they accepted his hospitality at once; they said, "So do as thou hast said;" but when Lot asked these angels to come in, they said, "Nay; but we will abide in the street all night." There must have been some reason for the different reception of the same courteous and hospitable invitation, given by the nephew. No doubt they intended in this remark to rebuke Lot, by delicately insinuating that he had deliberately selected an unholy and corrupt city for his residence, and that his home was not what it should be. They conveyed gently but faithfully to his heart a rebuke, as they substantially said, "Whilst we embrace thankfully the hospitality of Abraham, we have some hesitation in accepting that not less courteous, but not equally pure, hospitality which you offer us." How strikingly consistent is the continuity of the narrative in this single instance! How true to life, to fact, to truth! Afterwards they consented, when they had conveyed the rebuke, and he set before them that simple entertainment which it was customary in those days to provide.

We read the account of the criminal mob. They said to Lot, instead of thanking him for the benefits that he had spread around

him, and all that he had done to increase their traffic and add to their good, "This fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge; and they pressed sore upon him." The angels assisted Lot, by smiting with blindness the mob that was without, and called upon Lot to escape for his life, bidding him bring all that he had out of Sodom, because the cry of it was waxen great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord had sent them to destroy it. But his sons-in-law (what a rebuke to his past conduct, which had sanctioned that relation, and which induced him to take up a home in that city, which led to that relation) his sons-in-law, whom his daughters married because they were rich and great, laughed at Lot, and mocked at what they supposed to be his folly. Poor Lot himself was so infatuated, that for a moment, it appears, he lingered; and the angels, it is said, took hold of him, and hurried him out, God being merciful to him. I fancy that his lingering was not altogether love of Sodom; but the poor man's heart was so broken, his expectations so shocked, his hopes so crushed by all that he saw, that I believe he was bewildered and paralyzed.

God thrusts out of danger many a reluctant one still. Here, poor man, Lot's characteristic infirmity broke out; he could not take God's law at once, but again he edges in his own corrupt and miserable expediency: Do not let me go to the mountain, but let me go to the little city Zoar. Just so the sinner still struggles with God for a little bit of self-righteousness to take to heaven, instead of taking God's way, which is always the truest.

Lot's wife disobeyed God's Word, took her way, not his—and looking back, was turned into a pillar of salt.

Here one catastrophe after another is heaped upon poor Lot, that we, on whom the ends of the world are come, may learn what a bitter thing it is to depart from God. God rescued Lot from the ruin he had brought upon himself and family. Lot was never happy, even when his prosperity was greatest. It is recorded that "he

vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." He was a brand plucked from the burning—a proof how rich is the grace that so interposed, how long-suffering the God that pitied and preserved him.

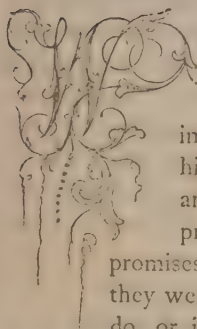
There is much dispute about the sites of Sodom and Gomorrah. The greatest light that has yet been thrown upon it has been by Lieutenant Lynch, who set out to investigate the whole state of the country about the River Jordan and the Dead Sea. In the course of his remarks, he states that they found, at the south-eastern extremity of the lake a large pillar, composed of saline substances or particles, which the persons resident there declared was Lot's wife, the pillar of salt. That it was not so is Lieutenant Lynch's conviction, though it was popularly so said. The Dead Sea, which is the lasting and unmistakable memorial of the awful ruin of Sodom and Gomorrah, is also described by this enterprising traveller. He describes it as being a very remarkable place, and observes: "The inference from the Bible, that this entire chasm was a plain sunk and overwhelmed by the wrath of God, seems to be sustained by the extraordinary character of our soundings. Between the Jabbok and this sea, we found a sudden break down in the bed of the Jordan." The three gentlemen who set out on this interesting voyage, came unanimously to the following conclusion: "We entered on the sea with conflicting opinions; one of the party was sceptical, another a professed disbeliever in the Mosaic narrative. After twenty-two days' close investigation of the Dead Sea, if I am not mistaken, we are unanimous in the conviction of the truth of the Scriptural account of the destruction of the cities of the plain. I record with diffidence the conclusion we have reached, simply as a protest against the shallow deductions of would-be unbelievers." Now, it is very interesting that men with that tendency should have received such a conviction from such an investigation.

The whole biography of Lot reveals the unforeseen issues of an

original deviation from the paths of duty, holiness, and love. Sin, and sorrow, and trouble followed him at every stage. His history is stained deep and dark. The brand plucked from the burning retains indelibly the fire-mark. "Search us, and try us, O God, and know our hearts, and see if there be any wicked way within us, and lead us in the way everlasting." There can be little doubt that Lot was a child of God; yet, as such, a brand plucked from the burning—almost lost, yet altogether saved. This instance is a singularly instructive one. Lot's is a biography, awful yet suggestive: God's mercy abounds over man's transgression. It reveals how rich is the forbearing mercy of God—how awfully a saint walking carelessly may fall. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." "Guide us by thy counsel. Hold us by thy right hand."



The Birth of Isaac.



E now come to the actual history of the fulfilment of an ancient promise made to Abraham, often renewed, and in circumstances of great and impressive solemnity. We learn, from what the historian records as fact, how faithful God ever is, and ever has been, to the least and greatest of the promises which He Himself has given. These promises seem to involve impossibilities; but, just because they were promises, nothing can be impossible for God to do, or improbable to expect, which, in his own blessed Word, he has actually made promise of. He said, that Sarah in old age should have a son; and that son, in the fulness of the time, was born unto her, and his name, we are told, was called *Isaac*; that is, *laughter*, *merriment*, or *joy*; or it may be called *good news*, as if it were an anticipatory accent of that real good news which, in the fulness of the times, sounded from the skies, when angels sang, "Unto you is born this day a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."

Abraham took Isaac, and admitted him, by an outward rite, into what we believe was the outward and visible communion of the people of God, or enrolled his name amid the worshippers of God by a rite or ceremony which, I have ever felt, corresponded in that dispensation in its application to the ceremony, or sacrament, or rite of baptism in the Christian Church.

We read that Abraham was a hundred years old when this child was born unto him. The child, then, was not the offspring of nature, according to the laws of nature, but the unexpected child of grace, and the exponent of the fulfilment of a promise given by the God of grace to Abraham.

Sarah says, "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me." When the promise was made, Sarah, in her tent, overheard the promise, and laughed at it. The thing was so incredible to her, that she laughed at the very announcement of it, as impossible and absurd; and she now says, with great emphasis, referring to her laughter, "With incredulity," she says, "I laughed in unbelief; but God has made me to laugh in reality. I find that my laughter before was the laughter of unbelief; my laughter or my joy now is that of delight, and gratitude, and faith in God; for He has made even me, incredulous as I am and was, God has made *me* to laugh and be glad, as well as Abraham, the father of the child."

She next exclaimed, "Who would have said unto Abraham that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have borne him a son in his old age"—repeating the cause of her laughter, and explaining how remarkable it was, and how truly it became her, to recognize this son Isaac, not as nature's gift, but as grace's special and peculiar boon, as a fact above nature, and therefore a miracle.

Ishmael persecuted Isaac. Ishmael was the son of the bond-woman, or the secondary wife of Abraham; for you must recollect that Hagar was as truly Abraham's wife as was Sarah, being then what was called a secondary wife, publicly recognized, and married to Abraham under a state and a dispensation in which, according to the language of our Lord, this was tolerated for the hardness of their hearts. Here Ishmael found that he was likely to be supplanted, and Hagar saw that she might not now occupy the prominent place which she thought she had secured in preference to

Sarah. Conflict, antagonism, envy, jealousy, broke out. Ishmael naturally vindicated and took the part of his mother Hagar, who had probably been despised by Sarah, whose temper was not of the happiest kind constitutionally. The son of the bondwoman, seeing his mother Hagar not treated kindly, mocked at Isaac, the son of promise; and the consequence was, that Sarah came and said, "Cast out the bondwoman." Abraham hesitated. It was painful to do so, but he was told by God that it was right before Him; and his doing so was not cruelty to Hagar, but a legal necessity, in order to exclude Ishmael from the inheritance, that Isaac, the son of promise, who was the right inheritor, might possess that inheritance. He therefore gives to Hagar bread, and a bottle of water, or, as it in all probability was, *a sheepskin of water*. The poor mother, thus driven forth, set out toward the wide wilderness without the utterance of a murmur or complaint, taking the lad with her. The water in the bottle was soon spent; the pangs of hunger and thirst came on; she laid the child, or the lad, under the shrubs. He was a youth, a stripling, probably fourteen years of age. "And she went, and sat her down over against him, a good way off, as it were a bowshot; for she said, Let me not see the death of the child." The lad began clearly to faint first. I think the picture is worthy of a master's pencil; that sketch, that beautiful picture, where she hid her eyes, and sat at a distance, that she might not gaze at the expiring agonies of the son for whom she had suffered so much, and whose exile and banishment she pitied so truly.

But in this state "God heard the voice of the lad." How beautiful is this, that in that desert the cry of that lad reached the ear of the Lord of Hosts! God was watching over him. There is not a Christian who cannot fall back upon God's protecting and preserving goodness upon every occasion. Often has He rolled away the cloud that was ready to burst with judgments upon us. Often has He cleft the mountain, and made a passage for us. Often

has He made the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, guide us into paths of safety, and shield us from the way of peril.

“And wilt Thou hear the fevered heart
To Thee in silence cry ?
And as th’ inconstant wildfires dart
Out of the restless eye,
Wilt Thou forgive the wayward thought
By kindly woes yet half untaught
A Saviour’s right—so dearly bought,
That hope should never die !

“Thou wilt ; for many a languid prayer
Has reached Thee from the wild,
Since the lone mother, wandering there,
Cast down her fainting child,
Then stole apart to weep and die,
Nor knew an angel form was nigh,
To show soft waters gushing by,
And dewy shadows mild.

• • • • •
“From darkness here and dreariness
We ask not full repose ;
Only be Thou at hand to bless
Our trial-hour of woes.
’s not the pilgrim’s trial o’erpaid
By the clear rill and palmy shade ?
And see we not, up earth’s dark glade,
The gate of heaven unclosed ?”





God's Promise to Abraham. — Gen. xv. 5.



Abraham offering up Isaac.



NEW and truly awful incident occurs in the declining years of the Father of the faithful. Yet out of the darkness were struck imperishable lights, and hopes, and expectations. God is nearest when the night is darkest, and the trial sorest. "God," it is said, "did tempt Abraham." This was in no sense an inducement to sin, or a provocation to evil. In this respect, no man is tempted of God. God tried or tested the faith and obedience of the patriarch, not that God needed proof, but that Patriarch, and Prophet, and Apostle, and Christian, in every age, might see the depth and energy of a faith which faltered at nothing. David prayed to God to prove him in any way He pleased. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

The Almighty thus addressed the patriarch: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering." Abraham received this unexpected and awful order after he had been told that in old age there should be born to him a son, and after he had supposed that Ishmael was that son, and, being disappointed in him,

had received Isaac as the son of promise, his only and dearly beloved son, and the only apparently possible channel through whom and by whom might be sent the promised Messiah, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. Disappointment had followed disappointment, and now darkness deepens into darkness. In the depth of his first depression—depression that almost deepened into despair—Isaac, the son of promise, was born. The patriarch's joy was perfect, his expectancy was exceeded by its fulfilment; all was sunshine without, and all was brightness within. In the midst of this jubilant feeling, the voice of Him who made him leave the land of Ur, and go to the land that He would show him, sounded from the skies, and said to him, "Take now thy son;" and, as if to make it more emphatic, "thine *only* son;" and, as if still more to convey the greatness of the sacrifice, "thine only son *Isaac*," whose very name is joy, and whose birth has been to thee a spring of joy—"take thy son, thine only son Isaac;" and, as if still further to deepen the pain of the sacrifice, "whom thou *lovest*, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there," by slaying him "for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." What a mysterious command! What agony must have torn the heart-strings of the father! What a shock to the sensitive feelings of Sarah! Surely Abraham must have said, "Is it possible that this can be God's voice? Does it not seem, if it be real, as if God contradicted Himself? Does it not look as if He had made a promise only to break it." "What," he probably thought, "will people think of the slayer of his own son? What respect can they have for a religion that lends its sanction to murder?" His trial must have been severe; but his answer was the obedience of faith. Abraham knew that the God that gave Isaac was the God that required the sacrifice, and he felt, if he did not say, "The Lord gave him, and the Lord takes him away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Abraham took the wood and the burnt-offering, and he went to the place which God had told him of. And on the third day he lifted up his eyes, and saw the place; and he told his servants to abide at the foot of the mount while he went up. He then laid the wood upon his son Isaac, took the fire in his hand, and a knife, as if he had already a lamb for a sacrifice; and then Isaac said, as if acquainted with the nature of patriarchal worship, "My father; and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood;" "I understand the necessity of this, but surely there is some great gap in this day's proceedings—there is some want in this day's worship; I have seen on each past day of sacrifice more than is here; where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? There are the signs of sacrifice, but where is the substance? There is the form, but where is the life? Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? And Abraham said," in awful, but, to Isaac, mysterious accents, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering; so they went both of them together." Isaac was beautiful in his silence, as Abraham was strong in his faith.

The obedient victim is laid upon the altar. All the remonstrances and opposition of a parent's heart are hushed. Human feeling is sacrificed to Divine command; parental love is merged in obedience to Divine authority; and Abraham is ready, at any sacrifice, to do God's will. God the Author of the command; Abraham the actor; Isaac the victim and sacrifice: Abraham strong to sacrifice; Isaac strong to die. One knows not whether to admire most the faith of the son that submitted, or the faith of the father Abraham that obeyed. But just as Abraham lifted up the sacrificial blade to immolate his son, a voice, sweeter to his ear than all the strains of the richest earthly minstrelsy, fell upon the heart of the waiting, and the anxious, and the heart-broken patriarch. "The angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham. And he said, Here am I. And He said,

Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him : for now I know," and I have made it known, "that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns ; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering," in the place of his miraculously and divinely-delivered son.

Sweet is the calm after the storm, delightful is health after sickness, precious is deliverance after danger.

When God is about to bestow the very greatest blessing, He sometimes renders all visible probability of its descent the least possible. It is when the night is darkest that light is nearest. There is least appearance of blessing when the blessing is about to fall on us. So here. The promise to Abraham was, "In Isaac your seed shall be blessed, and be numerous as the stars in the firmament." But when God said, "Take thy only son Isaac, and offer him as a sacrifice," it seemed the entire blasting of the faintest expectation, or even possibility, of the fulfilment of this promise ; and yet it was only a contribution to its ultimate fulfilment. Abraham believed that God could, and probably that He would, raise Isaac from the dead.

" — All thy vexations
Were but my trials of thy love : and thou
Hast strangely stood its test."

The path of duty may be painful at the outset, but its issue is peace. At its hardest places, and amid the heaviest storms that bear on it, God sustains with Divine strength, and sheds down consolations that fill the heart of the pilgrim with deep and abiding joy.

Jehovah-Jireh.



THE patriarch named the hill, JEHOVAH-JIREH ; *i.e.*, “in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen,” or, “it shall be provided”—a prophecy expounded in the 53rd of Isaiah, while its fulfilment is related in the Gospels, and unfolded and enforced in the Epistles of the New Testament.

This great promise—“My son, God will provide Himself a lamb”—which Abraham delivered, was the repetition of one much older than Abraham. Amid the gathering clouds and expiring lights of Paradise, and amidst the encompassing wreck, and through the tainted air, God spake, and gave the promise that Abraham repeated in different terms—“The woman’s seed shall bruise the serpent’s head.” After Abraham’s reiteration of the promise, it was portrayed, in more or less definite shadows, upon the walls and altars of the ancient temple of Jerusalem. The paschal lamb was a foreshadow and pledge of it ; the morning and the evening sacrifice, and the varied rites of Levi, were unspent echoes of the promise made by God in Paradise, and repeated by Abraham on Mount Moriah. At last, prophets took up the strain which patriarchs had attempted, and one prophet, to whom clearer light was revealed, said, “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” At last, prophecy

swells into history, and the Baptist proclaims in the desert God's promise, that He would provide a Lamb, now ready to be fulfilled; as he said in those beautiful accents, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." We look to Jesus, read his life, and learn how true was the promise made four thousand years ago, "My son, God will provide a Lamb for a burnt-offering."

Abraham spoke this, not of himself, but as he was moved by the Holy Spirit of God, and therefore truly he promised, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb." On that very Mount Moriah, of which Calvary was one of the pinnacles or swelling heights, and in the fulness of the times, "*Jehovah-Jireh*," "the Lord will provide," passed from prophecy into history when Jesus expired upon the cross, and by a solemn amen testified of this promise, "It is finished." The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world is preached in every land. In Him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin.

God had the glory of giving the Lamb; God will have all the glory that results from it. Not one ecstatic thought in the bosoms of the redeemed, not one note in the compass of their glorious songs, not one moment in the rounding ages of eternity, will be without the blessed reminiscence of God's provision of the Lamb. In the Apocalypse, we everywhere see the Lamb upon the throne, and constantly hear the elders singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," and the redeemed responding, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation!" Salvation, that occupies so poor a nook in the human heart on earth, will overflow and dilate all hearts in the realms of glory, and prove the sweet burden of every song, the bright colouring of every object, and beat and thrill the pulse in every heart; the very life we live then shall be the life of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us. God has all the glory

of the gift, and God will receive all the glory of its eternal results.

Abraham said, "God will provide Himself a lamb." For whom is this provision? "God so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever"—He does not say that if he be elect he may believe; election has its own place; and to take it out of its own place is to mingle and confuse the revelation of God. The provision of the gospel comprehends, "*whosoever*." Those narrow distinctions that we think so great, are no more regarded by God in the great provision of his love, than the sand-ridges before the first waves of the advancing tide; the greatest prince and the meanest beggar, in the matter of ruin and recovery, are on a level in the sight of God; and however high the walls of sect, system, or party, however broad the distinctions of caste, clime, age, and country, all are overflowed by the waves of this spring-tide of love. In this matter, and for this purpose—the salvation of man's precious soul—there is not a down-trodden and oppressed one in the darkest and the dampest cellar for whom the Lamb was not provided—there is not a thoughtless and reckless one, living without God, and without Christ, and without hope, for whom the Lamb was not sacrificed. There is nothing to prevent the down-trodden, the degraded, and ruined sinner, having instant peace, unless that he thinks the provision is too grand to be true, too great to be believed. If God would bid us do some great thing, we should soon do it; but if He say, "Wash and be clean; believe and live," there is the difficulty many cannot get over.

What a blessed thought! Jehovah-Jireh—the Lord will provide. What a blessed pledge to true Christians who fear! What an encouraging promise to weak ones who faint! Here is one feature in the character of God—He will *provide*. Whatever be the want that is deepest, the Lord will fill it; whatever be the trial that is bitterest, the Lord will provide something in it, or through it,

or by it, that will make it good to them that feel it.™ In other words, it is a provision that will in all times be seasonable, that will in the worst emergency be effectual; and all that God asks of us is just to believe it, and to act upon it, and be at peace.

What will God provide for his people? He will provide for them, at least, daily bread. He bids them ask for it; and can God bid his people ask of Him anything that He will not give? I do not believe it. Wherever God inspires a prayer, there is there a purpose to answer. Whenever a special prayer is, by some strange and mysterious accident, as we call it, or association that we cannot get rid of, brought home to our heart, and we are taught and led to pray that prayer, it is a pledge and an earnest that God will answer it. He inspires the prayer He means to answer, and the very fact that we pray for a special blessing is in itself a pledge from heaven that God will bestow that blessing. Now, He bids us pray, "Give us this day our daily bread;" and as sure as we pray it, so sure He hears it; and we may say when we have prayed it, "The Lord will provide all that is good and expedient for us."

He will provide for us, too, support in the midst of our trials. Nobody is without trials. He who has fewest trials has fewest signatures upon him that he is God's child; for "what son is he whom the Lord chasteneth not?" "If we were without chastisement, we should not be sons." And our trials, instead of being discouragements, ought to be regarded by us as special hints, as secret revelations from God, that He has purposes of love and good concerning us. In these trials, the bitterest, the longest, and the heaviest, He will either provide an escape for the excess that we cannot bear, or He will perfect, in the midst of them, divine strength, and say, "My grace is sufficient for you; my strength is made perfect in weakness." Either in lightening the load, or in giving strength to bear it, "God will provide."

But our statement requires modification. God will not

always provide what we wish ; He will always provide what is better—what his wisdom sees to be best for us. Many a time we have wished for ourselves that which would have been, if granted, our ruin. When we enter into heaven, we shall thank God as much for the prayers that He never answered at all, as for the prayers that He answered most liberally and most readily. In other words, we shall then discover that we asked many a thing which, if granted, would have been our ruin, however natural and suitable it appeared at the time, and that God, in infinite and condescending and fatherly love, withheld ; and what He withheld will be to us a ground of as great and as rich praise as what He gave. How pleasant, how delightful to know that it is for us to ask ; it rests with Him to give—"the Lord will provide !"

If this be true in temporal things and earthly blessings with reference to God's people, it is no less true in spiritual and eternal things. "The Lord will provide." And what will He provide for the believer ? He will provide for him the pardon of all his sins. He has provided for him the purchase of it ; what He will now provide is the application of it. In Christ is redemption, in his blood efficacy to cleanse us from all our sins ; but from God is that application of it to our special and individual cases that makes us feel that all our sins are blotted out, and all our iniquities forgiven.

The same God who provides a title to heaven, provides happiness—an earnest of heaven in the possession of that title. Hence, the man who is not happy must be unhappy from something else than Christianity ; and he who is really happy can be truly happy from nothing else than Christianity. The first action of the gospel is to make man happy ; and its secondary, but successive, influence, is to make man holy. The law of God tries to make men happy by making them holy ; the gospel makes us holy by making us happy. By the law, we pass through holiness to happiness, and that is ever true ; but by the gospel we go through happiness to holiness—

the good news creating joy first, and gratitude for the good news creating holiness next.

The same God who provides for us this, will provide for us all the elements needful to progress to heaven. God never sets any one a warfare at his own charges. If He puts you on a journey, He will carry you on in that journey. If He puts you on the race-course, He will enable you to run with patience the race set before you, looking unto Jesus, not only the Author, but the Finisher of your faith. He therefore who provides for your pardon, will give you the elements of progress; and by a mysterious, but an actual process, He will make all things work together for good to them that love Him, and are called according to his purpose.

Having noticed the things that God will provide for us, let us notice what are the grounds of this conclusion. It is quite sufficient to read, "God will provide." Whatever God promises is true, though we do not see how He can make it true. We are very apt to fall into a mistake here. We read a promise, and then, instead of saying, "Well, this must be, because God has said it," we say, "How can this be?" or, "How will God bring it to pass?" And very frequently, because we cannot see how it may be, we very stupidly infer that it never can be. We have nothing to do with the possibilities of the thing; we have only to do with the revelation or the non-revelation of the thing. The question ought not to be, "How can this be?" the real question is, "Has this been said by God?" and if it has been said, it is his to do it, and ours to believe it, knowing that faithfulness has guaranteed that not one jot or tittle shall fail till all be fulfilled; and "heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

But God gives us an insight into the inner machinery, and that insight informs us that one ground of his providing all that we need is his own love. He so loved us, that He gave Christ to die for us. How much more will He perform those promises that He has made,



Rebekah at the Well.

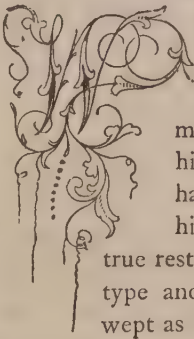
through Christ, to us? If his love gave great things, surely it will give small things; if his love provided the price of our redemption, surely such love will provide the means of the application of that price for our personal acceptance before Him.

But not only his love, but his power, is at the basis of these promises. What He wills He has the power to do. Man sometimes has not the will to do us good; and sometimes, when he has the will, he has not the power. But God has the will, for He has declared it; and God has the power, for He is omnipotent; and, therefore, what He has promised to provide, that his power will provide, and thus all his promises will be seen at last, far more clearly than they are seen now, to be yea and amen, irreversible and true, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us go forth into the unsounded future, and looking forward to all that betides us in that future, with this deep, inner persuasion written on our hearts, that God will provide grace and glory—that He will withhold from us no good thing; for all his promises in Christ are Yea and Amen.



Sarah's Death and Burial.



WE read of Sarah's death at the age of one hundred and twenty-seven years, in "Kirjath-Arba, in the land of Canaan," and of Abraham coming to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her, the partner of his sorrows, his sins, his joys, and his trials—who had joined with him in his equivocation, shared with him in his repentance, and now preceded him to that true rest, of which Canaan was the dim and the imperfect type and earnest. Abraham, however, showed that he wept as though he wept not, just as on previous occasions he rejoiced as though he rejoiced not, knowing that the world and the fashion of it passeth away.

We therefore find him proceeding, according to the necessities of an Eastern climate, instantly, or with scarcely an interval of a day, to bury his dead. He accordingly makes inquiry for such holding as he can find in the promised land. How suggestive and remarkable, his first property there is a tomb. He was promised Canaan as his rest—he was a sojourner in search of it; and the first portion of it that he could call his own was not a palace, a castle, or a temple, or a home—but a grave; teaching us, and teaching him, that Canaan could not be *the* ultimate and promised rest; for in the true Canaan there are no graves, nor death, and no dead are buried; there is no weeping nor dying there; and, therefore, the circumstance

inspired in the patriarch's heart the sentiment that he needed in the midst of Canaan to feel now as truly as he ever felt it before, "This is not my rest—this is not the real Canaan; there remaineth still beyond it and above it a rest for the people of God."

Abraham applied to the children of Heth, and dealt with them for the purchase of a tomb. First of all, they offered him the choice of any of their own sepulchres, but none of these would he accept. These sepulchres were cut out of the solid rock; the remains of many of them are to be found at this day; and, indeed, the very spot where Sarah was buried can be distinctly and clearly traced out now in the land of Canaan. Of these sepulchres cut out of the rock, these people offered Abraham one; but all of these he at once refused. He wished for a separate one, according to Eastern customs and Eastern predilections; and he required it, not gratis, but for money, and accordingly purchased it of Ephron, the son of Zohar.

The sepulchre was thus secured, and Sarah was buried at Mamre, the place where they had often worshipped, "and the field, and the cave that is therein," being amid the fields and trees that constituted the grove which was Abraham's first temple, and Sarah's last resting-place; and these "were made sure unto Abraham," that is, by documents, "for a possession of a burying-place by the sons of Heth."

A very recent visit to the tomb of Abraham and Sarah by the Prince of Wales gives this narrative a new interest. Bush the commentator thus describes it:—

"This cave of Machpelah became, after the purchase by Abraham, the family sepulchre of the Hebrew patriarchs; and it is reasonable to conclude that it was of superior size, and contained more than one apartment. The Spanish Jew, Benjamin of Tudela, visited the place about 650 years ago; and as his account is precise and interesting, we quote it from 'Purchas his Pilgrimes,' 1625: 'I came to Hebron, seated in a plaine; for Hebron, the ancient metro-

politan citie, stood upon an hill, but it is now desolate. But in the valley there is a field, wherein there is a duplicitie, that is, as it were, two little valleyes, and there the citie is placed; and there is an huge temple there called Saint Abraham, and that place was the synagogue of the Iewes, at what time the country was possessed by the Ishmaelites. But the Gentiles, who afterwards obtayned and held the same, built sixe sepulchres in the temple, by the names of Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Rebecca, Iacob, and Lia (Leah.) And the inhabitants now tell the pilgrimes, that they are the monuments of the patriarkes; and great summes of money are offered there. But surely, to any Iew coming thither, and offering the porters a reward, the cave is showed, with the iron gate opened, which from antiquitie remayneth yet there. And a man goeth down with a lamp-light into the first cave, where nothing is found, nor also in the second, untill he enter the third, in which there are the sixe monuments, the one right over against the other; and each of them are engraven with characters, and distinguished by the names of every one of them after this manner—*Sepulchrum Abraham patris nostri, super quem pax sit*; and so the rest, after the same example. And a lampe perpetually burneth in the cave, day and night; the officers of the temple continually ministering oile for the maintenance thereof. Also, in the self-same cave, there are tuns full of the bones of the ancient Israelites, brought thither by the families of Israel, which even untill this day remayne in the self-same place.’”

Dr. Stanley, the companion of the Prince, says:—

“In the recess on the right is the shrine of Abraham—in the recess on the left that of Sarah, each guarded by silver gates. The shrine of Sarah we were requested not to enter, as being that of a woman: a pall lay over it. The shrine of Abraham, after a moment’s hesitation, was thrown open. The guardians groaned aloud. We entered. The chamber is cased in marble. The so-called tomb consists of a coffin-like structure, about six feet

high, built up of plastered stone or marble. Fictitious as the actual structure was, it was impossible not to feel a thrill of unusual emotion at such a spot. . . . Within the area of the church, or mosque, were shown the tombs of Isaac and Rebekah. They are placed under separate chapels, in the walls of which are windows, and of which the gates are not grated with silver, but iron bars. To Rebekah's tomb the same decorous rule of the exclusion of male visitors is naturally applied, as in the case of Sarah's. But on requesting to see the tomb of Isaac, we were entreated not to enter. . . . The shrines of Jacob and Leah were shown in recesses corresponding to those of Abraham and Sarah, but in a separate cloister, opposite the entrance of the mosque. The gates of Jacob's tomb were opened without difficulty. The structure was of the same kind as that in the shrine of Abraham."

Sarah's dust sleeps under the oaks of Mamre. Her character was marked by many excellences and defects. Imperfect in her attainments, impetuous in her natural temper, and placed in circumstances of great trial and provocation, she lived not without sin. Her faith sometimes faltered. She disbelieved the promise of God, and laughed to scorn the possibility of its fulfilment. But she lived to see it fulfilled, and to laugh again—in adoring ecstasy and joy.

Sarah had great faults, but as certainly great and shining virtues also. Hers was a life chequered more than ordinarily—yet it was upon the plains of Mamre, what our life and the lives of thousands are now. Being dead, she yet speaks to us from her grave. Her faults are bequeathed to us as beacons, that we may carefully avoid them; her excellences are reflected as lights on the road, to lead us to follow Him whose example she earnestly followed, and from which transferred, trait after trait, to herself.

"Thus, though oft depressed and lonely,
All our fears are laid aside,
If we but remember only
Such as she have lived and died."

A Patriarchal Wedding.

OT the least interesting and beautiful episode in the varied history of Abraham is the account of his arrangements with Eliezer, his steward, for the marriage of Isaac. There is about it a beautiful simplicity that renders its perusal a perpetual treat to young and old.

The ardent desire the patriarch felt that his son should marry one of his own faith and race should be the passion of every Christian father. It was neither selfishness nor bigotry. It was a vital principle in his faith, not a coarse prejudice. It involved momentous interests and issues.

The account of it forms an exquisitely touching sketch of patriarchal and primitive times, replete with lessons that apply to our circumstances with undiminished force.

The patriarch called Eliezer, his steward, to him, and made this servant swear, according to a peculiar but ancient formula, that he would take a wife unto Abraham's son; not of the daughters of the Canaanites, into whose land he had entered, and whose dispossession by him was the subject of ancient prophecy—but of what we may fairly call a Christian people, and on no account out of the families of a heathen and depraved people, however wealthy such as the Canaanites were.

The servant accordingly took the oath, after an ancient and primitive form, but said—what must have naturally occurred to his mind—"Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land;" or she may have, what a woman may fairly exercise, a will of her own. It seems a very decided, though very agreeable act for me to recommend Isaac; I will do so with all the eloquence which I can command; but I cannot forget she has not yet seen him, and my recommendation, however eloquent its terms, and even conclusive its appeal, in my own judgment, and also in yours, may not on this account prove as successful as you and I could desire. My eloquence may not be sufficiently persuasive to overcome a natural or instinctive reluctance; "peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land;" and if so, what will become of my oath and my obligation to you? Abraham felt, or rather knew, that the arrangement was made primarily in heaven, and that these steps were merely making it actual in the history of his family upon earth. "If the woman will not be willing to follow thee," then you have done your duty; results are not ours—no blame can fall on you. Duties still are ours, just as they were Eliezer's. The issues and the events are God's, and these rest with Him.

Eliezer "took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand; and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia." He felt that, while the thing might be in its arrangement divine, yet it was his duty to take what would exert upon the heart of Rebekah, or the future and possible wife of Isaac, the deepest and most attractive impression. He therefore goes forth with ten camels laden with bracelets, and earrings, and jewels, and changes of apparel, in order that the future wife of Isaac, whoever she might be, might thus learn that Isaac was not a poor man, but rich and great—that he was prepared to bestow all the treasures of his house upon her whom he hoped to have the happiness to make his wife.

He then "made his camels to kneel down without the city, by a well of water, at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water." It does not altogether suit our ideas and habits that females of the highest rank should draw water, and carry home the pitchers on their heads or shoulders. Yet it is a custom at this day among the Bedouins, and was, beyond doubt, the usage in the days of Abraham. Those of highest rank carried the pitcher on their shoulder; hence, Rebekah carried her pitcher upon her shoulder; for she was of a high family, and of distinguished birth. The servant recognized the arrangement as divine, and evidently did in the choice of a wife for Isaac what the apostles did in reference to the successor of Judas—they cast lots, and the lot fell on one. Here he makes an arrangement—not a precedent for us, because, unless we have a miraculous commission, we have no right to make miraculous appeals to God. Besides, there was then no written Bible as there is now. Then God spoke to his people directly from his throne, instead of giving directions as He does now, through his inspired servants in his written Word. Hence, it was the arrangement urged by Eliezer, "Let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also; let the same be she which thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac;" "then I will understand that this is the person divinely elected by God for the son of my master Abraham."

It came to pass, "before he had done speaking," that among the eastern females who came out to the well to fetch water, there came, amongst others, Rebekah, "who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcar, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother," and therefore the cousin of Isaac, and the niece, of course, of Abraham.

"The damsel was very fair," and this made a favourable impression, and the servant ran to meet her; and as she was the first to come, he resolved to put to the test the issue of the



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THE MEETING OF ISAAC AND REBECCA.

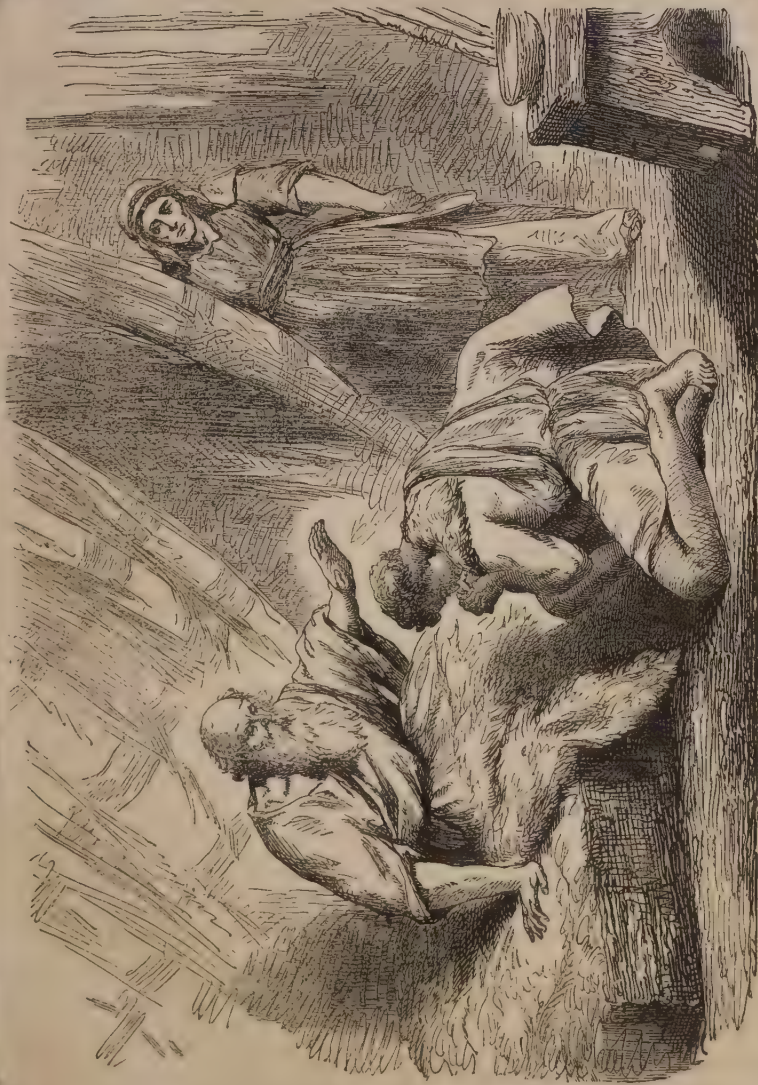
LEIGHTON, BROS.

arrangement that had been made divinely with Him who alone could give success to the enterprise he had undertaken. "He ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher. And she said"—with instant and perfect courtesy and kindness—"Drink, my lord; and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him drink"—and here was the proof to him that she was the accepted and the predestined one—"she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking," which was more than he asked, and therefore was most satisfactory to him. "And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels." There were ten camels, and therefore she had to descend several times into the well. At the well at Cairo, they have to descend one hundred and fifty steps before they can reach the water. They do not seem to be acquainted with our plans for raising water by the pressure of the atmosphere, or by rope or wheel; and therefore the common way is to descend the steps; and thus we can more easily see how great was Rebekah's loving-kindness and courtesy when she put herself to so much personal toil and drudgery to oblige this stranger, with his camels, from a distant land.

"And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring, of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands, of ten shekels weight of gold," and put them on her. Now, a female of modern times would have shrunk from this; but may it not be, that what we call our most distinguishing and delicate etiquette may be only the beautiful outside of a great deal that is wrong within? And may not there be, in this unsuspecting simplicity, a purer heart than in modern times, where there is exhibited more of apparent deference, but really less, it may be, of true, pure, and lofty principle. I do not say it must be so; I submit the contrast, for each reader to infer which is best.

He then said to her, "Whose daughter art thou?" This would be thought a very impertinent question now, but it was then, and was meant to be, a very civil one. Hence, it was received by her as neither indelicate nor rude; for she answered, with all the simplicity which is so beautiful, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcar, which she bare unto Nahor;" while she added, in the overflowing kindness and hospitality of her heart, "We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in." In those days there were no hotels and inns; and hence the force of the remark of the apostle, that a bishop should be given to hospitality—that a bishop's or a minister's house should be a hospitable inn. These words had an emphasis which they have not now; but still the substance remains, although the formula under which these feelings and duties were expressed may be changed. And Eliezer instantly said, "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham!" He asked God's guidance; success seemed sure, therefore he gave God the praise. Whatever begins with prayer will be sure to end with praise. People who pray for a blessing before they begin an enterprise will, in most instances, close the enterprise they have begun with praise for its results.

"Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban; and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well. And it came to pass, that when he saw the earrings and bracelets, he said, Come in." As far as one can judge of Laban's conduct, one must suspect he was not a specimen of the noblest and the finest character. He thought the marriage was desirable for the earrings and the bracelets—that is, for the dowry—more than for the family into which his sister was to enter; for it was when he saw the earrings and the bracelets that he said, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels." It is not certainly a beautiful trait in Laban's character; it indicates an avaricious heart. It is like showing more respect to a rich man



Isaac Blessing Jacob.

than to a good man. Afterwards, "he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him. And there was set meat before him to eat." But this servant in the house of Abraham was evidently a man intensely and faithfully devoted to his work, his master, and his mission; he would not even eat until he had explained the whole matter. We cannot fail to notice how intensely and sensitively devoted he was to his master's service, honour, and happiness; perhaps it was because his master put confidence in him that the servant requited it. The true way to get men to love you is to love them; the true way to get servants to serve you is to put confidence in them; but if you are always suspecting them, you must expect eye-service only.

Eliezer showed a devotedness to his master, and a courtesy toward Rebekah, as delicate as true. He rehearsed to Laban all his instructions. Laban declined to exercise any coercion in a matter in which the heart alone must decide, and therefore he said, "We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth. And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go." The eloquence of Eliezer, and his history of Isaac, and his pious devotion to his God, and his ardent duty to his master, gained the heart of Rebekah.

When Rebekah was brought to Isaac, "he loved her," and "was comforted" for the loss of his mother Sarah. No doubt there was a change in the tent, because there had taken place a change in the person; the old glory of that venerable home had faded, and a new light was now to take its place. The vision of Sarah, the ancient worthy, had passed, like a shadow from the dial; the music of her voice, once so instructive, had died away, and a young and beautiful, but inexperienced wife, now took her place. These are the changes that occur every day.

We followed Sarah to her burial, and Abraham mourning after

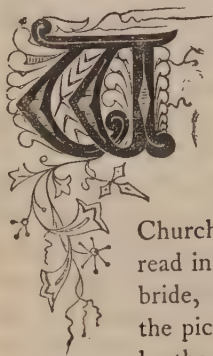
her ; we now follow Rebekah to her wedding, and Isaac rejoicing and comforting her. How true is this ancient picture to human life, in all ages, centuries, and countries. We attend the burial the one day—we attest the bridal the next. We hear the muffled tread of the mourner following the sparkling footstep of the dancer, and thus tears and smiles, showers and sunshine, in this nineteenth century make up the April day of human life. The experience of patriarchal days is the scarcely modified experience of modern times. Sarah, a mother, is one day borne to her grave ; Rebekah, a bride, is next day conducted to her bridal chamber. Pæans and complaints, lights and shadows, bridals and burials, still pass before us. “It remains that they that weep be as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not.”

Abraham lived, a sojourner on the earth, wholly by faith ; and therefore his anxious selection of a suitable wife for Isaac was, no doubt, by faith also. Abraham justly regarded marriage in those days as a sacred and solemn compact, not, as is now too often the fact, to be celebrated in a civil registrar’s shop, but in the house of God, and amid the lights and truths, the hopes and joys, of Christianity. Abraham felt what the Apostle Paul teaches, that they that marry should marry in the Lord. Of all them that live in the Lord, and marry in the Lord, and die in the Lord, the beautiful and comforting benediction is pronounced—their most eloquent epitaph—“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord ; yea, saith the Spirit, from henceforth, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.” Our blessed religion is calculated to sweeten the joys, as effectually as to mitigate the sorrows and the disappointments, of human life. It is a religion, not only for sick beds, and funerals, and losses, but for bridals also, as well as burials, for sunshine as well as cloud, for joys as well as sorrows. The first miracle Jesus did was at a wedding. He who knew what life is, and what was at the end of his own—a cross, with all its

agony and shame—hallowed a wedding by his presence, like the sun dawning, in the form of a nuptial benediction, before He poured down his consolations on the bier of the son of the widow of Nain, or at the grave of the brother of the sisters of Bethany. He came to rejoice with them that do rejoice, as well as to weep with them that weep ; to sweeten and temper human joys, as well as to sanctify and comfort in human sorrows ; and so to teach us by such facts that our religion makes our joys sparkle more brightly, as it makes our sorrows heal the more speedily. Whether for bridals or for burials, for birth or death, for tears or smiles, ours is a faith ever rich in consolation, sanctification, and direction.



The Bride.



E have now seen sweep past the earthly shadow, let us try to gaze at the divine original ; for all such relationships in human life are not the causes, but the consequences, of an archetypal original that existed, and still exists, in glory. Jesus Christ is the great Husband of his

Church. This is not a mere human expression, for we read in Revelation, "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." In the 45th Psalm, we see the picture of the believer's relation to Christ set forth by the ceremony of a marriage celebration, according to Eastern and ancient ceremonies. In the Gospel according to John, the Saviour tells us, "He that hath the bride," that is, Christ, "is the Bridegroom," and he that stands by is satisfied when he sees this his joy fulfilled. The foundation of all good to mankind is Christ's love, "who loved the Church ;" the process through which He prepares the Church for presentation to Himself—He sanctifies and cleanses "through the word ;" the destiny for which He is preparing her is Himself—"to present her to Himself;" her character is glorious, and without spot, and without blemish.

Christ not only loved the Church, but He gave Himself for her. Let us weigh this sublime thought. Had we heard, for the first time in our life, that God manifest in the flesh gave Himself for sinners,

how impressive would be the effect of such news! If He had given a look, it would have been as wonderful as undeserved; if He had expressed a deep sympathy with our common ruin, it would have been no ordinary thing; if He had sent an angel, from before the throne, to help us to work our way to heaven by toil and tears, it would have been gracious indeed; but all would not have effectually served our souls, nor would it have expressed the extent or depth of his love; He therefore gave Himself, a sacrifice. He came into the condemned cell of the prisoner, and He took upon Himself the convict dress, and transferred to us captives of sin the bridal robes, in order that we may be a glorious Church, without spot, or blemish, or any such thing. He gave Himself, not an example, but an expiation—not an instance of what a martyr can bear, but a sacrifice, a price, an atonement, a ransom, for us.

What was his object in so suffering? “That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” He prepared this Church for Himself, He selected her for his own, and so He made her holy and lovely. “I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers’ skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil; and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth

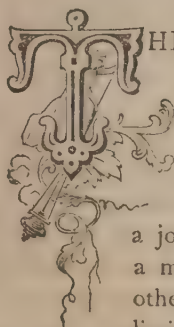
among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God."

This redeemed Church—holy within, and all beautiful without—Christ will present to Himself, a glorious Church.

Christ's Church is not, indeed, now glorious in outward aspect. It is glorious really, and in destiny, but not visibly so. "Our life is hid with Christ in God." "The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." But why are Christ's people hidden? Because they are, in comparison of the world, very few. Probably all England is baptized, but it would be an awful mistake to suppose that all the inhabitants of England will be saved. It is a very awful thought even to suppose the possibility of a lost soul. There is something so terrible, so inexhaustible, in that awful catastrophe, that one should speak of it only with bated breath and awful feeling. Yet it is true, "Except a man be"—not baptized—"born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." We must not affect to be more pitiful than God.

Except we belong to this true Church, we cannot be saved. We may belong to any visible Church upon earth, but if we do not belong to this elect Church, we are not sons of God, nor are we component and living parts of the only bride, the Church that makes ready for the Lord Jesus Christ. But, blessed be God, there is no exclusion from this inner and true Church, except what we ourselves inflict, for no decree drives any one to hell. No man within earshot of the sound of the gospel goes down there unless by his own suicidal rejection, or wilful and criminal neglect, of the entreaties and offers of the truth. Hence, while there is no salvation outside this inner and true Church, there is no exclusion from it. God shuts in; He does not shut any out.

Abraham gathered to his People.



HE Moslem, the Jew, and the Christian look back to Abraham with admiration, as one of the most illustrious stars in the ancient firmament. An idolater by birth, he was born again by the Spirit of God, and became the progenitor of the Messiah.

During a famine in the land of promise, he makes a journey into Egypt, and there becomes the victim of a miserable expediency, which has left a stain on an otherwise splendid name. The land becoming too limited for him and Lot both, he yields to Lot the choice of remaining or retiring, and emerges from the cloud into greater lustre by his courtesy and self-sacrifice. He recovers unhappy Lot from captivity, meets Melchisedek on his victorious return, and from him receives a blessing. Abraham died at the age of one hundred and seventy-five years, rich in faith, in hope, and joy. His body was buried with Sarah's, and his spirit entered into the joy of his Lord.

Abraham saw Christ's day along the vista of many hundred years. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad." The rays of that rising Sun illuminated his life, lighted up his soul, and filled his heart with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. His faith was prospective—ours is retrospective; but the same Saviour is the object of both. He saw his birth at Bethlehem—

his holy and beneficent life in the streets, and lanes, and temple of Jerusalem.

The patriarch saw Christ's death—a death as peculiar as his life. It was not a mere martyr's agony, but a victim's atonement. Abraham saw Christ's death in the awful incident in his chequered history when he led his only son to the sacred mount, a willing sacrifice. When Isaac was delivered, his father said, "The place shall be called *Jehovah-fireh*"—"The Lord will prepare," or "The Lord will provide"—"as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." He heard from afar the sound of the resurrection, and saw the rays of its glory that was to be.

The day Abraham saw was a day of light such as had never fallen on earth. He saw the Sun of Righteousness rise above the distant horizon, and advancing steadily to his noon-tide throne, "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." It is a day of light—why are any in darkness? A day of freedom—why any in chains? A day of life—why any dead in trespasses and in sins? It is a day of hope and joy. It is the very first effect of the preaching of the gospel to make sad men happy and weeping men glad. The direct effect of the gospel is, not to make men holy; this is not the first, but second effect. We judge of an effect by an analysis of its cause. What is the gospel? Good news. What is the effect of good news? To make the hearer happy. Its sound is an endless jubilee—its day an everlasting Easter, a day of joy. It is reasonable to expect it will be so. Ought we to suppose that God will make his enemies happy, and leave his children sorrowing and sad? Such would seem most unnatural. One would expect that God would make his friends happy, and leave his enemies only sad. The gospel carries its joyous influence into the recesses of the soul.

Abraham did not see Christ as fully as he wished to see Him;

he desired to see Him as He is, in all his glory, and the intensity of his faith made him feel more keenly the imperfection of his sight of Christ. But yet such was the joy that overflowed from the sight, and filled the deep wants and yearnings of his heart, that it made him leap for joy to see so much of Christ; for he saw Him, and rejoiced. Such spiritual desires as those planted in Abraham's bosom are never unfulfilled—because inspired by the Holy Ghost. Abraham desired to see, and he saw. The God who gives the want fills it; the God who makes you hunger feeds you, and satisfies it with "the finest of the wheat."

The longer we enjoy the gospel, the more calm, but not the less deep and strong, will our joy be. When Abraham got a glimpse of Christ, it is said he "leaped for joy;" but after he had seen Christ more fully, and had become more thoroughly acquainted with Him, he was "glad." The first burst of joy, as it broke from the patriarch's heart, leaped like a little streamlet let loose from the mountain-side, sparkling and making sweet music in the sunshine; but after the streamlet had become deeper by bringing into its channel other tributaries from the same spring, it grew calmer as it became deeper, until it reached the infinite main. Thus it was with Abraham's joy; it was first the sparkling music of a little streamlet, at length it became a deep, continuous river, full of strong conviction, and radiant with perpetual sunshine.

The best and the wisest men need peace, and Christ Jesus. Abraham had, no doubt, great sins; but notwithstanding these, he stands up, holy, singular, prominent, alone, a contrast amid the corrupted nations that lay around him. Yet Abraham, though the conqueror of kings, the friend of God, the fervent suppliant before the gates of Sodom, the obedient in the face of every difficulty, so signalized by virtues that contrasted so brilliantly with his few and far between, though real, defects—felt that he needed Christ, just as truly as Lot, when snatched a brand from the burning; and he

looked for that day when Christ should die for him, and rejoiced while he saw it.

How, it may be asked, could Abraham believe in Him who was not yet come? We answer, the Lamb was "slain from the foundation of the world." Abraham as truly believed on Christ as the most eminent and gifted saint that recently died. His faith was faith in a future Christ, ours is faith in a past Christ; but the faith of both rests on Him who ever liveth to make intercession for us, and dieth no more.

In all time of your wealth—in all time of your tribulation—when memory is full of memorial tablets of the dead, and the heart heaves like the sea, that cannot be at rest—when dust goes to dust, and your beloved are buried out of sight, raise your weeping eyes from life's clouded day, and fix them on Christ's glorious day, and all shadows will dissolve in eternal sunshine, and all the ripples of grief blend into the river of peace, and all tears sparkle with everlasting light; for Christ is the Resurrection and the Life.

There is for us a glorious future—a sure re-gathering—a blessed restoration: God has promised it.

Abraham was gathered to his people. These were plainly the souls who had preceded him to heaven. They were not those buried in earth; because the only spot he could claim in Canaan was a grave, and the only one of his own people in that grave was his beloved Sarah. To be gathered to his own people must mean something more than that his dead dust was gathered to that of Sarah. Who, then, were his own people? All who worshipped and served the same God, who, like him, leaped for joy when they saw Christ's day, and were glad—Adam, Eve, Abel, Enoch, and Noah—these were his own people. When he departed, his soul—for his body was but the outer inn, in which the immortal guest dwelt—was gathered immediately to his own people. It is a very beautiful and comforting fact, that in the case of an aged Christian,



The Burial of Isaac.

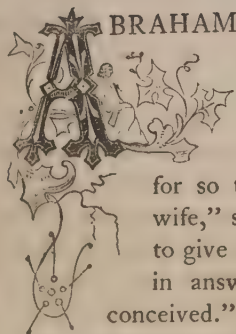
who has already lost most of his family by death, if that family consisted of true Christians, he has a deeper interest in the future and upper world than he has in the present, and more ties to draw to glory than to detain on earth. Therefore the instant that Abraham died, he joined the company of the holy, the good, and the happy, who had preceded him to glory. There was no arrest of his progress, however short—no suspension of conscious life even for a second. He had no sins to expiate between this world and the next, for the blood of Jesus had washed them all away. He had no torment to endure, for Christ had borne the curse, exhausted all the penalty, and brought in everlasting pardon and happiness. "Absent from the body," in the case of a Christian's soul, is "present with the Lord." "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord," not that they may enter on some intermediate process of torture or purification, but "that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." When a Christian dies, his is instant joy, infinite happiness, perfect peace! His body is his prison, life is the jailer, and death is the kind messenger from God, who undoes the bonds, and lets the inmate, or rather immortal prisoner within, go free. A Christian dies, bidding farewell to time, but—all hail to eternity!—sure that the moment he leaves this scene he enters joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Men do not cease to influence others after they are dead. Abraham lives and acts in the facts of his biography. Thousands have their principles kindled at the flame the holy patriarch lighted some three thousand years ago. We, too, when we die, shall leave behind us an influence which will walk the world, and mould surviving hearts with posthumous power. There is no fireside on earth that is not either brightened or shaded, more or less, by the surviving example of some inmate who has gone upward to another world. We carry within us two living immortalities—one goes into the future, the other walks the world we have left. Not merely great

and public men, but the humblest upon earth, are sowing seed broadcast, that will rise up after they are gone, and ripen into harvests of banes or blessings to many of mankind. Let us live, therefore, as those that must one day die, and leave behind us an ever-operative influence. Let us pray and strive to make the world a little brighter and better for having been in it—to leave, at least, a beautiful example, that, by its sacred effects, will make men rise up and pronounce our memory blessed.



Isaac and his Children.



ABRAHAM has departed in peace. Isaac takes the duties of his venerable father, and begins the long march of life. It appears that Rebekah had no children. This was a grief to her, and to her husband. They therefore pray together ; for so the words, " Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife," should be rendered—that God would be pleased to give them a child, an heir of promise. It is written in answer to their united supplications, " Rebekah conceived." But her feelings were strange, and to her inexplicable : " the children struggled together within her." Puzzled and perplexed, she turns to the sure fountain of light, and asks of the Lord for such information as might be expedient for her. The Lord told her, " Two nations are in thy womb ; the one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger." These two peoples were the Israelites and the Edomites—races totally different in their customs, religion, and manners. The Edomites were finally subdued by Israel.

The twins were, no doubt, of very opposite original temperaments ; but the original bias in each was aggravated by the partial and imprudent treatment they received from their parents. Isaac's partiality to Esau was weak and unworthy ; Rebekah's love to Jacob seems to have involved dislike to Esau.

In Esau was the founder of one great tribe, and in Jacob the founder of another. In Jacob we find sin as well as in Esau; but we discover one dark and too memorable in Esau, for which he is severely reprehended by the Apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews—he sold his birthright. What, it may be asked, was his birthright? He was the eldest son of the family, and was therefore entitled to the largest share of the inheritance. His, too, was succession to the highest honour and dignity. One day he came home from hunting, feeling hungry, and, to satiate his appetite, and in the recklessness of his character, he sold that which he could sell, but not recover—that which was his highest honour and his greatest glory, for a little food given him by his twin-brother Jacob.

Let us never sell that which we believe and know to be true, and from God, for anything upon earth. Our birthright in this country is an open Bible—it is a precious heritage—let us never part with it; freedom to worship God as in our consciences we believe to be right—let us never surrender it. If we surrender an open Bible, freedom of worship, our common social, national, and Christian privileges, we shall soon have to write upon our altars, and upon all our real greatness, “Ichabod, Ichabod, the glory is departed.” Let us hold fast, at any sacrifice, what we know to be true. Let us yield any prejudice, or any preference that will please and propitiate a brother, but let us never surrender, on any terms or for any prospect, or out of any courtesy, the great and glorious truths of the gospel. God’s Word alone is the light to our feet, the lamp to our path; Jesus alone is our sacrifice and our Saviour; there is to us a way, and the only way, to heaven without obstruction, without let or hindrance, through the shed blood, and in virtue of the finished righteousness of the Son of God.

Esau’s great and irrecoverable loss and sin lay in his exchanging a precious spiritual privilege for an earthly and merely sensual gratification. He under-valued what was great, and over-valued

what was trivial and transitory. Are there no Esaus among ourselves? There are, it is to be feared, men in every age who are ready to surrender precious truths, and solemn obligations, and vital interests, to mere party, to political expediency, to worldly preference. There are political Esaus, and literary Esaus, and ecclesiastical Esaus, in the nineteenth century. It is needful to impress on all such the very solemn thought, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul."

The privileges which Esau exchanged for the momentary gratification of his appetite were—first, the special consecration to God which was the privilege of the eldest; secondly, a double portion of the family inheritance, succession to the father in government, and the honour of priesthood, which was his. Esau counted all these as of less value to him than a dish of favourite lentils. The "profane man, for a morsel of meat, sold his birth-right." Bishop Hall justly remarks, "There was never any meat, except the forbidden fruit, so dearly bought as this broth of Jacob."

It was an irrevocable transfer. That one deed extended over the whole life of Esau, and coloured all its incidents. It is an awful fact, that we may do in an hour what cannot be undone or neutralized in a lifetime. Moral acts project sunshine or shadow from youth into the remotest old age. In the furrows of selfishness and injustice are sown the seeds of sorrow and death. The highest expediency is purity, truthfulness, justice, and love. We may undervalue earthly blessings, when they present themselves as rivals to heavenly privileges; but to despise everlasting mercies, to treat with contempt God's great privileges, this is to be "profane."

Jacob's conduct was anything but right. This, however, does not vindicate or palliate the profanity of Esau. Let us take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

Isaac in Gerar.



FAMINE falls on the land—a dark cloud on a sunny sky. Isaac was tempted to flee into Egypt for relief, but God forbids him to gratify this inclination. “The Lord appeared unto Isaac, and said, Go not down into Egypt.” There is a great deal of practical wisdom here. It is the tendency of man, when in extreme want, to have recourse to improper, and even forbidden, means to relieve it. So the disposition of the Israelites, on a famine breaking out in Canaan, was not to trust where they should, and as they had been taught, but to fly to Egypt

for help. Such schemes, then and now, are still found in the long-run to be the least expedient or successful. The way of sure success is to keep at the post where God has placed us, and there to feel assured that the post of duty is, not only the post of safety, but the place of the enjoyment of the greatest available happiness. It is always wise and well to remain where God has placed us; it is always perilous to forget this, and set sail upon what seems expedient, instead of steering by the chart, the compass, and the pole-star that God has given us. And therefore God said, “Go not down into Egypt”—however tempted to do so. Trust and wait.

God renews his promise of spiritual blessings in order to cheer

Isaac in temporal distress : "I will be with thee"—and truly if God, the all-sufficient, is with one, one need fear no evil—"and will bless thee." Even prosperity without God is not a blessing ; whereas affliction with and from God our Father is a blessing. God's presence, power, and love make the darkest nights bright ; and the absence of his favour leaves the brightest days dark and dreary. Therefore an ancient Christian could say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

God graciously renews to Isaac the magnificent promise He had given to Abraham. But while the echoes of this promise were sounding in his ears, Isaac repeats the sin of his father in similar circumstances. "The men of Gerar asked him of his wife, and he said, She is my sister ; for he feared to say, She is my wife." He feared danger, and therefore he did what too many still do—he had recourse to falsehood in order to escape it. But we have always found—every schoolboy can tell us—that a falsehood deliberately told, to avoid a contingent danger, is the nearest way to rush into greater and worse calamities than we at first feared. How inveterate is the corruption of human nature ! How contagious is a bad precedent ! Isaac repeated the sin of his father—imitating his bad example, and forgetting his holy lessons.

Let every parent recollect that, though his child's memory may forget the lessons he was taught, his nature will not forget or give up readily the impressions from the example it has felt. It is not a father's lesson that so powerfully teaches ; it is a father's life. It is not what one says, but what one is, that leaves so impressive influences on one's family. Abraham's good lesson was, in this instance, forgotten ; but Abraham's twice-seen bad example was accurately copied. Example is always more powerful than precept.

Abimelech seems not to have been the same person of whom we

read in Abraham's history; it appears to have been the name applied to the kings of Canaan in the same way as the name "Pharaoh" was applied to the kings of Egypt, and "Cæsar" to the emperors of Rome. Abimelech, however, discovered that Isaac had deceived him, because he saw a familiarity between Isaac and Rebekah, that indicated they were related to each other in closer bonds than those of friendship; and he rebuked him for what he had done. Even the heathen king showed Isaac that a lie was as unnecessary as it was wicked.

God forgave the sin of his servant, and continued to bless him. But toil and trouble did not cease. The Philistines had filled up the wells which the servants of Abraham had dug. They would not use them, and they spitefully made them useless to others.

Isaac wisely and prudently did not fight about the possession or restoration of the wells; but as they stopped up one, he went and dug another. He refused to quarrel about any one well; he did far better. He went and dug another—willing, as long as there was room and provision for him and his, as much as lay in him, to live peaceably with all men.

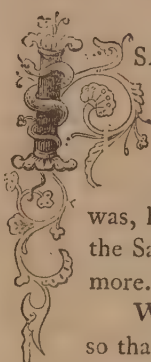
"Isaac builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there." It is just and proper to observe, that whilst Isaac copied one bad precedent in his father's life, he was not insensible to his many good, bright, and holy acts, and pious example also. Wherever Abraham pitched his tent, there he built an altar. Isaac caught this beautiful trait, and so, after the holy habit of his venerable father, where he pitched his tent, there he raised his altar. Still, where the tent is spread, there the altar should be built. In every home, however humble, there ought to be the recognition and worship of God. Wherever there is a family, there ought to be family worship. The tent will be more beautiful in consequence, and its stakes will be stronger, because the God in whom we live and move and have our being, and from

whom our blessings come, is recognized, and worshipped, and looked up to from beneath its shadow.

Is there an altar in our tent? Is God adored, and loved, and recognized in our homes? Religion is not a thing for the four consecrated walls of a sanctuary only, but an element suitable and serviceable for every home. It is more beautiful in homes—the first churches—than in churches so-called. No matins or vespers in a church ought to be substituted for family worship. In the home, the father is the priest as well as the head of his family, and he ought to see that the altar is raised where God has allowed him to pitch his tent.



The Blessing obtained by fraud.



ISAAC, a gentle, domestic, and retiring old man, warmly attached to Rebekah, fond of his children, showed in his last days too plainly the weakness of advancing years. In no transcendent or eminent degree was he distinguished among the patriarchs of ancient history. He was, however, a link in that chain from which the Messiah, the Saviour of the world, was to descend, and apparently no more.

When old age overtook him, and "his eyes were dim, so that he could not see," he called his son Esau, and said, that he wished to have some food prepared for him before he died, such as he knew was agreeable to his taste, and sufficiently savoury, as it is called, and, as is often the character of Indian and Eastern preparations, to stimulate the worn-out and jaded palate of an aged and almost dying man.

Rebekah heard the order given to Esau by his blind and aged father, and instantly resolved to practise a deception in order to secure the blessing to Jacob. She told Jacob, whom she loved, to go and personate Esau, whom she rather disliked, and to pretend to be the elder brother; and, having ministered most acceptably to Isaac, thus to carry off the blessing. It seems singular that Isaac should have most loved Esau, for Esau was the least religious of the twain; while it seems natural that Rebekah should most have loved



Jacob at Bethel.—GEN. xxviii. 18.

Jacob for his otherwise amiable and religious characteristics and features. It appears, too, that Rebekah was quite aware that the blessing was not only to pass by the elder, Esau, but was to light upon the younger, Jacob, according to ancient and inspired prophecy. Remembering that this was God's end, and supposing, as too many in later years have concluded, that a good end covers with its glory the worst of means employed to promote it, she practised a very gross deception. To reconcile so great duplicity and imposition with undeniable Christian character is hard indeed. It is evidence of the great amount of alloy in an otherwise pure and beautiful character.

Even if it was Rebekah's design to help God to fulfil his promise—which was certainly not her province—the steps she took to accomplish it ought to have struck her enlightened mind as wholly unjustifiable.

Jacob put on the fleece of a young kid, in order that he might thereby more easily personate the rough and hairy Esau. Rebekah exerted all the tact and employed all the resources of a woman's skill to perfect the deception. Isaac's eyes were dim with age—his fingers had lost the sensibilities of youth. Thus, with almost blind eyes and blunted touch, he supposed it was Esau. One sense retained its keenness—his ear had not lost its power of hearing. This almost exposed the trick. When Jacob spoke, the old man said, "The voice is Jacob's, but the hands are the hands of Esau." Jacob wickedly declared he was really Esau, and thereby obtained the blessing due to primogeniture. His conduct was most sinful. It cannot be vindicated. Rebekah aided and facilitated the deception by clothing Jacob in the "goodly raiment" of Esau.

The eldest son, in patriarchal times, inherited the priestly office. The Levitical priesthood was not yet instituted; and the head of the house was therefore the priest of the family. The first

churches were in tents—the first priests were the patriarchs. The eldest son inherited the priestly office, and the “*goodly raiment* of her eldest son Esau” is the very same word in the Hebrew and the Septuagint Greek which is applied to the robes of Aaron and the sons of Levi. It would therefore appear that it was a priestly garment which was put upon Jacob, that thus the father might be more easily deceived.

The patriarch pronounces the blessing: “God give thee of the dew of heaven”—in an eastern clime most precious, since, from an early part of the spring till the autumn, there is no rain, and the dews water the ground; it was therefore the symbol of fertility—“and the fatness,” or productiveness, “of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee. Be lord over thy brethren.” This was partially fulfilled in the family of which he was a link. But it will be thoroughly fulfilled when God shall give Christ the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

Esau afterwards came in, and his father discovered, amid trembling and sorrow and dismay, that he had pronounced a blessing which he could not reverse upon the younger son Jacob, instead of Esau the elder; although it was the express promise of God that Jacob should have the blessing.

It seems to us a very difficult thought, that after God had given a promise that Jacob should have the blessing, He should permit the use of such wicked means for the fulfilment of that promise. But we must always distinguish between what God does, and what God simply tolerates. It is one thing to tolerate what is wrong; it is quite a different thing actively to support, maintain, and promote it. God tolerates in his own great province much that is evil; but He is the author of nothing that is sinful. In fulfilling his purposes, we sometimes see instruments used, in themselves most objectionable so far as their character is concerned. Cyrus was called the battle-

axe of God. He helped to achieve the great purposes of God, and yet God did not approve of Cyrus.

Esau soon discovered his irreparable loss, and with tears and entreaties cried to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" The father would not, and could not, recall the blessing. St. Paul says of Esau on this occasion, "He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." This does not teach that repentance was withheld from Esau, but that Esau's entreaties and appeals could not create repentance or change of mind in his father Isaac, and thereby secure the withdrawal of the benediction from Jacob, and its restoration to Esau. Nevertheless, Esau obtained a broken blessing from his father. "And Isaac, his father, answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth." This would seem to be almost the blessing of Jacob reduplicated on Esau. It is singular, however, that the preposition "*from*" is, by some mistake or misapprehension, left out in our version; for the passage ought to be rendered, "Behold thy dwelling shall be *far from* the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven from above; and"—instead of living by the fatness of the earth and the dew of heaven—"by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother." The only good part in this blessing is found in the end: "When thou shalt have the dominion"—that is, when all things shall be righted—"thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck;" and the descendants of Esau, by grace, shall be raised to an equality of privilege and blessing with the descendants of Jacob, and those that are his.

Esau appears in this history as a worldly man, and as such much more beautiful in his character than Jacob. Esau seems to have appreciated the blessing, to have wept sincerely over its loss, and to have acted, up to a certain point, with a tenderness and forbearance that make the natural man contrast very much to the disadvantage of the spiritual man. But at the close his true character comes out in

its real colour, for he resolved to slay his brother Jacob—envy, revenge, ending ultimately in an attempt at murder.

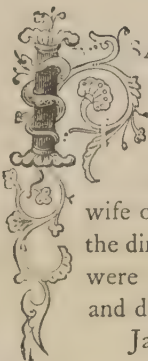
Rebekah comes again before us. She finds that the son for whom she had obtained the blessing is ready to flee, and the son whom she had deprived of it prepared to become a fratricide, and her life grows, as she well deserved, into a burden to herself, too heavy to be borne.

If we trace Jacob's history through all its lights and shadows, we shall see that, while no sentence is pronounced upon him according to his deserts, and no immediate retribution follows his lying and disingenuousness, there comes out in the sequel of Jacob's remarkable biography a minutely retributive punishment. We hear, in his sorrows in his latter years, the echoes of his sins in his earlier days. When he was told that his own beloved son Joseph was murdered, and his coat was brought to him stained with blood—a deception practised on a father by his sons—he recollected, in these retributions into which God precipitated him, the sins of his youth; and, no doubt, bitterly did he sorrow over them, as fully as we know he obtained forgiveness and absolution from them.

God makes the sinner's sin find him out, and yet forgives it in his own. Sin committed by a Christian does, in this life, frequently receive its retribution, even if forgiven. As often as God shows us character in its worst traits in his Word, He takes care in the sequel of the history of that character to prove, by facts, that man never stood stronger by sin, and that a Christian never lost anything by faithfulness to God.



The fugitive Jacob and his Dream.



ISAAC charged Jacob, on whom the blessing had fallen, and from whom it could not now be taken away or alienated by Esau, to select a Christian wife from a Christian family, as became him; in the same way as Isaac himself was guided to marry a wife of a Christian family, according to the instructions and the directions of Abraham. These patriarchs and their wives were Christians of the dawn. What they did was necessary and dutiful, and so far is still obligatory on us in all respects.

Jacob went forth on the errand indicated by his father, as well as in obedience to the advice of his mother, and partly by the necessity of his position—to seek a good wife. In his pursuit of this object, he was persecuted by Esau, and forced to be a refugee for life. Esau had resolved to slay him, and Jacob, conscious that he had bitterly offended against him, and had acted deceptively and fraudulently, felt that Esau's persecution was too well deserved, for he had treated him most cruelly and wickedly. Fleeing, therefore, from Esau, he goes out to “a certain place, and tarries there all night.” The sun had set; he was far off from the confines of civilization, from city and village, and all society. He gathered together the stones of the desert, and made a pillow for his aching head, and fell asleep. There he dreamed a dream—a mirror and a revelation of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. God appeared

to him in his dream at the top of a mystic ladder, which connected heaven and earth, and was the type of Christ's mediation, and renewed the promise that He had made to Abraham and Isaac. Thus, instead of visiting him for his sins, because God's ways are not our ways, He visited him in a promise of unexpected and undeserved mercy. To the meaning of this vision we will elsewhere refer.

"Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." Very often it is so with us. We have been in circumstances where God was, and our insensible hearts knew it not. We have been placed in afflictions, where we felt pain only was, and we have afterwards discovered that God was too. It needs the circumcised heart to feel, and the anointed eye to see God, and to realize his presence, and to be assured that He is where the world neither sees, nor feels, nor knows, nor seeks Him.

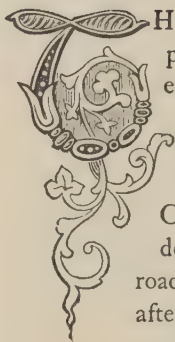
Jacob rose up early, and took the stone, and set it up for a pillar, anointed it with oil—that is, set it apart, or consecrated it—"and he called the name of that place Beth-el," which means, literally, "house of God," the former name having been "Luz," that is, "a place where almond-trees grew." Thus, by his communion with God, he consecrated the place. It is to this incident that St. Paul alludes when he calls the Church the pillar of the truth—the house of God.

At the close of the patriarch's vision, the sacred words unfortunately seem to convey that Jacob made a sort of mercenary bargain with God: "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my Father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God." But this is not the exact rendering, nor does it convey the idea of the original. The meaning is: "*If* it be true, as God has promised"—not doubting it, but accepting it—"if God will thus keep me, give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; if the Lord thus be my

God"—that is to say, if He be such a God as this—"then the least return that I can make for all this is to accept Him as my God." In other words, he accepts God as a promise-making God first, and then, on the ground and footing of that, he pledges himself to be his child, his follower, and a believer. "And this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be [Beth-el] God's house: and of all that Thou shalt give me, I will surely devote the tenth to the acknowledgment of thy sovereignty, and of my allegiance to Thee." His vow was the expression of grateful feelings created by his experience of previous goodness of God.



Jacob's Ladder.



HE word translated "ladder," the object of the patriarch's vision in the desert, is, perhaps, not the exact rendering—it is not the best. It might be correctly translated, "staircase." It means also "high-road," a "staircase," or "platform," of any material, stretching from earth to heaven. On it Jacob saw the angels of God ascending and descending. Christ is the true pathway and high-road from heaven to earth. The Saviour says, "Hereafter shall ye see the angels of God descending and ascending on the Son of Man."

It is plainly indicated by the heavens being opened, and a highway stretching from heaven to earth, that divine communications are now interchanged between heaven and earth. Such began in Paradise, and only closed in their inspired character, as far as written testimony is concerned, when John finished the Apocalypse in Patmos. Jacob saw, in this vision in the desert, Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life—the medium between heaven and earth—the pathway across the gulf which sin had made between the continent of heaven and this isle on the bosom of the infinite deep we call earth.

In Christ we have a revelation of God. As God stood at the top of that staircase or highway seen by Jacob in his dream, pro-

claimed what He was, God is now revealed in Christ, informing me what He is to me, and what I may be to Him. Christ is not only an atoning sacrifice, but a revelation of the infinite God. What Christ reveals is as precious as what He is.

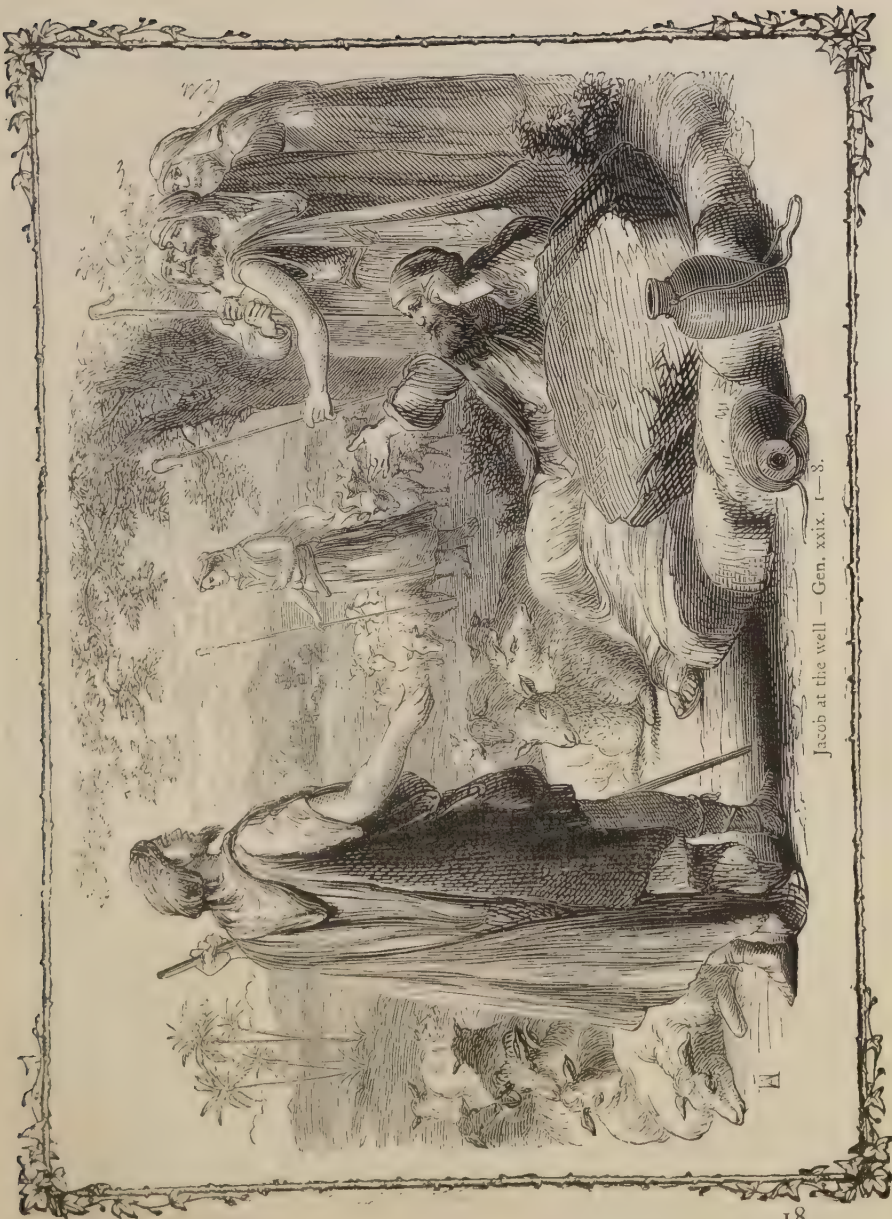
Jacob's vision revealed a highway uniting earth to heaven and heaven to earth. All that vision was historically as a sign, Jesus does really. The instant man sinned, this orb lost its polarity, and man's heart its love to God. Man and his world were flung off from God.

This Way is for all that will. There is nothing in God's provision on Calvary to repel any. If any fail to reach heaven, it is because they either take some way of their own, or will not enter upon that which God has laid down. There is no brand on any brow, no exclusion, unless it be our exclusion of ourselves. God cries from heaven, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come;" "Come unto me, all that labour and are heavy laden." God now receives more glory from the salvation of the greatest sinner than He ever could have obtained by his condemnation according to the law. God is not only now faithful and just to forgive us, but He is glorified when He does so.

Jacob saw but one highway, or ladder, or path to heaven in his dream. There is but one way stretching across the chasm of our separation, uniting earth to heaven. If we do not take that one way, it matters not what else we adopt—we cannot rise to heaven. Should any one assert that any one sect, or church, or party, is the only way to heaven, he would be guilty of bigotry and exclusiveness; but to say there is but one way to heaven, and that it is neither a church nor chapel, but the Lord and the Saviour of sinners, is to speak the language of truth and love. Jesus has settled it, "I am the way; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." The truest church gives the clearest testimony to the way. The church is not the way, but the witness to the way. We can no more be saved by

churches, and chapels, and sects, than we can be saved by town councils, colleges, and parliaments. A church is not a Saviour, it is not the way to heaven at all ; it is merely a witness to the way, a voice crying to man, "This is the way ; walk ye in it." When any church assumes the awful prerogative of being the way, or of asserting that only "by me is there access to heaven," such a church acts traitorously, by renouncing her duty, which is to witness to a way external to herself, as well as by her attempt to steal a ray from the glory of Christ. He alone is the way of communication between heaven and earth. We must all humble ourselves to walk in God's way, or we must be satisfied to take our own, and to find to our ruin how truly Solomon has spoken in the Proverbs, when he says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

But this way is amply sufficient. If it were so very small or narrow, that only one, two, three, could march to heaven together, it would be a very hard and painful provision ; but the beauty and glory of this provision—Christ the way—is, that all the world, if the world will, may walk in it, and yet there will be room for worlds and worlds more. It is so broad, that the greatest sinner may enter on it ; while it is so narrow, that the least known sin will not be tolerated in it. When one reads of different sections and denominations of Christians quarrelling about this way, it reminds one of two minnows quarrelling about room in the great and unsounded ocean. It is untrue that there is no room for some. There is plenty of room for all. There is no necessity for brethren to quarrel by the way. The word of God truly says it is narrow, and we sometimes think it very much narrower than it is. Many find great difficulties and obstructions in it ; but whence do these arise ? The defect is not in the way, but in the traveller who walks in it. If we insist on taking contraband goods, or a burden we ought to leave behind, or if we persist in going to heaven with our titles and our



Jacob at the well — Gen. xxix. 1—8.

merits as indispensable accompaniments, we shall find the road impassable to us ; but if we go as we are, taking nothing with us, and pleading only the preciousness of that blood that opened it, and the love of that God who provided it, and the faithfulness that keeps it open, we shall meet with infinite welcome. The way will be found so broad, that the wayfaring man cannot err therein.

All in this way are brethren, and members of the same church. There is but one true church, there are many imperfect ones. The true church is the company of all believers, or, if we may be allowed to define it from the figure we are illustrating, of all the travellers in the way to heaven.

It is a living way. This is a precious fact. The longer we walk on a road on earth, the more weary we become, because we give out energy and derive none ; but the longer we walk in this way, the less weary we become—we receive energy, and part with none. Hence it is said, “They shall walk, and not faint ; they shall run, and not be weary.” Those who are in this way do not walk at their own charges ; they that have walked the least feel the most weary, while they that have walked furthest feel least weary, because nearest to their home.

It is an ancient way. It is not a modern discovery, but an ancient revelation. It was disclosed to Adam in Paradise, and, amid the light of the cherubim, who, with flaming swords, watched the way into Paradise. Noah saw this way when it was over-arched by the rainbow which rose over it in beauty and glory. It was sung by the son of Jesse, it was proclaimed by the prophets, it was enunciated by Paul. God instituted it, and He receives the glory.

There is always a church where God and a believer are. In Jacob's case, the desert was the only aisle, the hard stone the only altar, and the solitary heart the only worshipper ; and yet there was a church. It is not stones, bricks, and rafters, still less rood-screens, shrines, and things of that kind, which make a church ; a church

is Christ, the risen and living Head, in the midst of a living, worshipping, and believing people.

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past by the prophets, hath, in these last days spoken to us by his Son.” In Him all types, and symbols, and prophecies, and priest-hoods, and sacrifices culminate, and find their perfection and their exhaustion. He is all and in all.



Jacob's first Interview with Rachel.

JACOB went on his journey. He had just escaped from the persecution of Esau ; he had also seen a beautiful apocalypse of God at Beth-el ; and, refreshed by the scene he had witnessed, and the divine pledges he had heard, and the persecution he had shaken off, he lifts an elastic foot, having a happy heart within—the source of a light foot without—and journeys toward “the people of the east.”

As he journeyed, he came to a well, and “a stone was upon the well’s mouth.” In eastern lands, and in a hot climate, a well is still a most precious possession ; and in order to guard it from being choked by the sands of the road, and from decaying vegetation being whirled into it by the wind, heavy stones were placed upon the mouth of each well, to be partly a protection, and partly to keep the water cool, and partly to show the wayfaring man where the well was situated.

At the well were flocks of sheep. Jacob said to the shepherds, “My brethren, whence be ye ? And they said, Of Haran are we. And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor ? And they said, We know him. And he said unto them, Is he well ?”—or, literally translated, “Has he peace ?” And hence, the *salaam* of the Indian, the Arabic or Hindostanee word, being a surviving echo of the Hebrew *shalom*, which means “peace.” Hence

also, "Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house"—make your *salaam* upon it, or wish it to have peace.

They told Jacob, "Behold, Rachel, Laban's daughter, cometh with the sheep." It seems to us strange that Rachel, who was the daughter, I may almost say, of a prince, should be a shepherdess; but not more strange than that Rebekah, who was the daughter of a king or sheik, should carry water from the well. These were usages perfectly compatible with dignity of position; and thus some things which seem strange and inexplicable to us, were not only understood and justly appreciated in ancient and eastern countries, but were subject to no misconstruction.

"While Jacob yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his *mother's* brother, and the sheep of Laban his *mother's* brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his *mother's* brother." Jacob recollected how Rebekah, his mother, went on her journey to meet Isaac, his father. He recollected, too, that he was the favourite of his mother, that she loved him very dearly, while his father preferred and loved Esau. No doubt beautiful and tender recollections of home, and of her who was the pillar, the ornament, and the glory of home, rushed into the wandering patriarch's memory, and made him associate all he saw with a "mother," as the uppermost thought and most lasting affection in his long-sorrowing and depressed heart. And Rachel's likeness to Rebekah, his mother, clothed her, in his eyes, with new loveliness.

In the overflowing exuberance of the moment, while a thousand recollections and associations thrilled, as it were, and made his heart-strings vibrate, the patriarch gave expression to the most pure and beautiful humanity, though it seems to us a liberty too soon taken—"he kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept."

"Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother." Those

words, *father* and *brother*, are very often used in the Old Testament Scriptures simply in the sense of kinsmen. Jacob said that he was her father's kinsman, "and that he was Rebekah's son," and therefore her cousin; "and she ran and told her father"—a most becoming and beautiful act on the part of Rachel.

"And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things. And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month. And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought?" Such seems to be a fragment of a very interesting dialogue. Jacob had heard from home that he must not venture to come back, for that Esau's hand was still lifted up against him, and therefore he must try to live, if he could earn anything, with Laban, in the country of his mother's relatives and friends. Hence, Laban spoke of his serving him; and, with his characteristic reference to price, he told him that while he must serve him, though he was his kinsman, he should not serve him for nought, and therefore he should have wages—an addition to the service that helped to sweeten it.

"And Laban had two daughters," Leah and Rachel, the one being the less beautiful, the other being "beautiful and well-shaped," as the sacred words might be rendered. "And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter." In eastern countries, it is a common custom, and in ancient times it was the universal custom, for the husband to give the dowry to the wife. Hence, when a man had many daughters, he was accounted then, not very unfortunate, but very rich; for every man who married one of his daughters gave a large dowry in exchange for her. Jacob had no estates, but he had that which constitutes the poor man's only capital—his thews, his

sinews, his health and strength ; and he said, "I will give you what is all my property or stock in hand ; that is, my strength, my energy, my service. I will give you seven years' labour"—which, rightly valued, would amount to a very considerable sum in wages. He served the seven years ; and then, when he demanded Rachel's hand, Laban, with a deceit scandalous and unpardonable, and a wickedness that indicated the depravity of his own heart, gave him tender-eyed Leah instead of the beautiful Rachel. This is easily explained by the fact, that in ancient times, and according to eastern habits, at the close of the wedding-day, the bride was conducted to the husband veiled ; and in the darkness of the night, as we are told, he could not see whether it was Leah or Rachel.

When he discovered the deception, by morning day-break, as he very soon did, he remonstrated with Laban, and Laban said that it was the custom of the country to marry the firstborn before the younger, whether he liked her or not. This was very wicked in Laban. He should have told him so before it was too late, but he did not. "It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn." According to Indian customs, this is a very frequent practice. Scarcely will a father give his second daughter in marriage, till the eldest daughter has been previously married.

Jacob's love, however, was too real to be easily put off by any concession short of Rachel, and he served other seven years to get Rachel for his wife. There were secondary wives tolerated by God in patriarchal days—as He Himself has said of divorce—for the hardness of their hearts.

How ardent must have been the love of Jacob to Rachel ! Love is never weary in the work that belongs to it, never fatigued with the toils that devolve upon it in pursuit of its object ; it is, in short, the strongest impulse in the human heart, whether it be the love a child bears to its mother, or of a patriot to his country, or of a Christian to his God. History is the eloquent record of its

victories. Martyrs who have perished in the flames—patriots who have freely laid down their lives for their country—parents who have sacrificed and suffered for their children—are all recorded in the eloquent pages of history, as proofs how strong is this passion when its object is purely human, how near to omnipotent when it is the inspiration of the Spirit, and God our Father is its object. Then indeed it has the fixity of a rooted principle, and the fervour of a burning passion. Under its inspiration, years have seemed like days, heavy duties have felt light, the hardest yoke has proved easy, and the heaviest burden comparatively light. No stream is so deep, that the foot of pure love will not wade it—no mountain so steep, that in the strength of this holy passion it has not been climbed. Years, however many, and time, however wearying, have all felt short for the love it bears to its object. Love can turn a hut into a home, create the germ of the future Paradise in the hardest heart, and spread the sunshine of Eden over life's bleakest deserts.

Read the solemn and sublime history of the cross; turn with retrospective veneration to Calvary, with its sacred associations; hear, sounding in the depths of the heart, this the most magnificent utterance in human speech, "God so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" or again, "For a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." And witness in these things sovereign, disinterested love, for the exercise of which there is no reason in us. Its origin is to be traced to the sovereignty of Him who revealed it. God's plan of creating love in the heart of man is not terror: it produces superstition—not reward: it produces self-righteousness—not command: it produces penance; but a manifestation of love on his part, so rich, so undeserved, that, contemplating what He has done for us, we shall, in the language of an apostle, "love Him, because He first loved us."

Peniel, or Jacob's Sight of God.



THOSE glimpses of Deity which appear in patriarchal days, like patches of sunshine under a cloudy sky, were all earnest of the glorious apocalypse we now enjoy in the gospel. They sustained the drooping hearts of sore-tried men, and at least convinced them that, in the worst of circumstances, they were neither forgotten nor forsaken. In the present instance, so vivid in itself, we have no ordinary sight. The scene at Peniel was intended to teach Jacob that many struggles and hard conflicts yet awaited him ; that, nevertheless, he was not to be discouraged by opposition, nor to fail to take heart, and bravely meet the worst, in the promised strength of Him who had raised him up, and meant him to triumph in the end.

Such is the condition of the Christian Church. Conflict, and controversy, and fears within, and fightings without, continue to be her uninterrupted experience. But as God appeared to Jacob behind the shadow of the man with whom he wrestled, so, in all that betides us, as in all that befell him, there is ever present behind the seeming human the really Divine. Those trials which we cannot now unravel or understand have their commission from God. Wounding us slightly, they benefit and bless us materially. But our strength lies in the source of our wounds. He that kills makes

alive ; He that wounds makes strong ; and the pain, which is but for a moment, is not worthy to be compared with the blessing that is to be revealed.

The scene is most remarkable. If it had been a mere dream, it would have been so said. The spot where all this occurred must have been to Jacob truly memorable. He called it *Peniel*, because he had seen God face to face. Every country upon earth has places which are the Peniels of glorious recollections. Our country has spots that are thrilling watchwords—the very mention of which inspires our flagging hopes, sustains our drooping hearts, and nerves for more heroic deeds. There are spots of another sort, still more remote, suggestive to the memory of the Christian. The Mount of Olives, Jerusalem, Gethsemane, are the bright Peniels of the world—the places where man has seen God face to face, and yet has lived. If memory could let go the recollections of these, and such as these, earth would be disenchanted of its most awakening and interesting recollections ; its brightest and most beautiful gardens would become deserts and wildernesses, by being dissociated from those precious recollections. But if there be places in all nations which are in some measure Peniels, and spots in Jerusalem and in Palestine that are literally, strictly, and indelibly so, there are also in every Christian's biography at least some bright Peniels. Is there no reminiscence of a sermon there that first deeply impressed us ? Is there no memory of a sanctuary in which we first heard the Word that became to us the savour of life unto life ? Is there no living recollection of some minister of Christ, whose ministry was first blessed of God to awaken, to elevate, to animate, and cheer ? There are spots upon the earth on which the snow in winter will not lie ; and there are places in many a man's life on which oblivion will not sleep, and the heart cannot look without being subdued and solemnized. These become brighter as we grow older, for they are gradually detached in memory from all the evil and the alloy that was

mixed up with them in actual fact ; and hence, in after years, and in the evening of life, we look backward to our Peniels, and feel refreshed by the recollection, and take heart to go onward in the journey of life that still lies before us. Are there not in the most homely, every-day life, however humble and obscure, such Peniels as these? Are there not eddies in its current in which God first met us? Are there not nooks and windings in its stream, where God swept past, or looked upon us from the cloud, and we arose other and stronger men? Are there not years, scenes, persons, associations, that still act on us as elastic forces, compelling to what is good and holy, and shine within as beautiful and precious images, indestructibly embalmed in memory? Happy are they who have had most of these bright Peniels, and happier are they that continue to enjoy their splendour, and see most of God in them.

The whole of this scene presents a picture of earnest prayer—prayer in its simplicity and its essentials—detached from all local, conventional, and circumstantial associations. Jacob's fold-stool, on this occasion, was the green earth—his oratory, the enfolding sky—his liturgy, the simplest words poured out from an earnest, a devout, and loving heart. It is not, as we may learn from the success of Jacob's prayer, the place that gives efficacy to the prayer, but the prayer that makes the place holy. It is not the oratory, as it has been alleged by some, that makes prayer, but prayer that makes an oratory—in a coal-pit, or on the mountain-top with the Alpine herdsman, or upon the deck of the ship tossed upon the waters, or on the battle-field upon the eve of conflict. The heart makes prayer, and prayer makes holy any place, and builds an oratory anywhere, and consecrates a Church, a true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, out of an ordinary crowd.

Bowed knees, and beautiful words, do not constitute prayer, but earnest desires from a heart bowed low by love, inspired in its depths



“And Jacob served seven years for Rachel.”—Gen. xxix. 20.

by God's Holy Spirit, and thirsting for God, the living God, ascends to heaven as incense from the purest altar.

Jacob, on this occasion, especially implored God's blessing. He said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." The intense earnestness of Jacob's prayer, and its untiring persistency, are most remarkable—"I will not let thee go." There was no formality here. There was a child-like simplicity in the words he used, and the feelings they expressed. Nor can we fail to notice the unworthiness that he acknowledged—"I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies." He asked temporal things, it is true, but the main thing he wrestled for was a blessing—that which alone sweetens the bitterest, and sanctifies the brightest lot. It is not only when we are afflicted that we need God's blessing. In our prosperity, as truly and as deeply as in the day of our keenest suffering, we stand in need of that Peniel—that light of the countenance of God which cheers and sustains. If our trials be blessed of Him, they will all work together for good to us; if our joys be sanctified, we shall taste new sweetness in them, and hail their approach as heavenly messengers from the fountain of love, and so learn by experience alike the value and reality of that promise, "I will bless thy bread and thy water." Our labours, like our lives, need to be blessed; for labour unblessed is trying to collect water in a sieve, which, as fast as it comes in, it is sure to run out. The promise implies this: "Thou shalt eat of the labour of thy hands." Our families need to be blessed. One reason why many families are rent and torn is very much because no blessing rests upon them; and the only reason why there is no blessing is just because the parents neither value nor seek it. There is no reason in God why every family in our country should not be happy and blessed, either in having much, or in spite of having little. The sole reason is in themselves. If we ask, we shall obtain; if we knock, it shall be opened unto us. This is the unchangeable promise of our God.

God's blessing is the true cure for all disorders, the true secret of all peace. If we ask health or prosperity, we ask outside things, which, however good in themselves, may not be blessings; but when we implore and receive God's blessing, the poor man will feel his penny far sweeter than the rich man feels his pound. Wealth does not make happiness, and poverty does not destroy it; it is the blessing of God that maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow. As often as man seeks other things, or tries to seize other things, in order to obtain what he feels his want of, happiness, his conduct is that of an empiric. If a person has aneurism of the heart, the physician would be an empiric who would order lotions to be applied to the skin. Were a upas-tree growing in your garden, dealing around its deadly and its pestiferous shade, man's foolish plan would be to sow a few new flowers, or graft upon it a branch of an olive-tree, or an apple-tree, or a pear-tree, thereby not destroying, but only diluting, and that slightly, the blight and desolation it distils. God's plan is to lay the axe at the root of the tree, and, on its removal, to sow broadcast the seeds of flowers that will never fade, till the desert smiles, and the wilderness blossoms as the rose, and the nations of the earth find shadow and peace. Jacob therefore said, in the exercise of a philosophy as profound as it was pious, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Some things God will not give in answer to the most earnest cries. He will not answer the prayers that are offered for the gratification of mere curiosity; but He will answer prayers for spiritual blessings.

Jacob asked the being with whom he wrestled, "What is thy name?" He—evidently the Angel of the Covenant, the Lord Jesus, and not a created angel—told him that he could not yet understand it, and therefore he would not reveal it to him. Some things, therefore, it is waste of time to pray for or to pry into. There are secrets the seals of which will be broken only amid the light and splendour of everlasting day; there are mysteries that lie shrouded in darkness

which will last with the duration of time, the shadows of which will be rolled away only by the dawn of the everlasting morn. Let us not waste our time and strength in seeking instruction in secret and curious things, wisely and well impenetrable to the human mind, and with no promise of explanation from God; but let us beg those plain and every-day things which we need for soul and body, so orderly and beautifully comprehended and arranged in that most perfect form, the Lord's Prayer. The age in which we live is the Peniel of the earth. While its day lasts, and its blessed light shines, let us ask, in Christ's name, mercy to pardon, and grace to help in our time of need.

The Angel-God refused to satisfy Jacob's curiosity, while he answered Jacob's prayer for a blessing. The parting wing of the angel, and the blessing that he left behind him, revealed to Jacob that he had seen God face to face. Let us learn to pray to God from the heart—to pray simply and earnestly for blessings present and eternal. In all our perplexities, let us draw near to God. He will give light in them whilst He will not gratify frivolous curiosity about them. Thus each new phase in God's providential government will reveal to us the great fact, that the problems of the world are the axioms of the Christian; and, strengthened by his might and inspired by his Spirit, we shall be more than conquerors over every opposing difficulty, through Him that loved us.



Laban's treatment of Jacob.

LABAN appears to have been a mercenary, selfish, money-making man. His sons inherited his nature, and, in addition, had learned his ways. Hence, they complained, "Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's, and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all the glory." Jacob noticed reflected in Laban's countenance the effect of the unkind suspicions and evil sentiments conveyed into his heart by his sons. Laban's countenance had not that bland and friendly aspect which it had before; it "was not toward him as before." He suspected he was about to try to find out the occasion of a quarrel, or to invent a pretext for one. It would be sad, yet interesting, to trace in this world's history the many quarrels that have been kindled by artificial causes, or struck out, and courted, and provoked for the quarrel's sake. Here Laban tried to seek out the occasion of a quarrel, in order that, in the excitement, he might have back much or all of the property Jacob had honestly earned. God put an end to the quarrel by directing Jacob to leave the place, and return to the homestead of his fathers, and to his kindred and his people. Jacob immediately "called Rachel and Leah to the field," in order to make this communication to them. This shows that he treated Laban no longer as a friend, but as a foe, for he did not dare, as usual, to meet Rachel and Leah

at their father's home. He accordingly sent a messenger to request them to come out into the field, to hear his account of the new crisis that had occurred in his history, and the necessity of his immediate escape from their father, Laban. He narrated the whole facts of the case fully and fairly, in order that the daughters might see it was not his fault; and he told them with honest truth, "Ye know that with all my power I have served your father"—and he might have added, "And this is all the thanks I get for it." "Your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times"—ten times, here and in similar cases, denoting simply a multitude of times—"but God suffered him not to hurt me." At the same time, he then alluded to the bargain he had previously struck with Laban—a bargain not marked by all the liberality which Jacob ought to have displayed, in the results of which, however, Laban was perfectly willing to acquiesce.

Jacob then told them how God had appeared to him, and promised to be with him. Rachel and Leah then said, "Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?" Though they were daughters, yet the affection of a daughter could not conceal from their eyes the duplicity, and even the dishonesty, of a father; and therefore they said, not, however, to the world, but to their husband—and it is one thing for a child to blazon a father's sins before the world, and another to admit them to her own husband—"Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money. For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours, and our children's;" but plainly he wants to get it back again, and leave us penniless. Our best way, our only way, is to leave him as fast as we can. When a young man married a young woman in eastern lands, he gave the father a sum for the daughter. Jacob gave Laban a sum for Rachel; but Laban not only took this, but made Jacob pay much more, by exacting years of personal labour from him.

The result of this domestic or family discussion was, that "Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels ; and he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods."

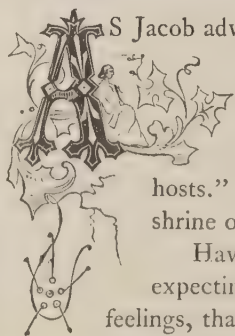
One fact occurred in the flight of Jacob with his family which seems at first sight, and perhaps even after we have made every apology and allowance, almost inexplicable. Rachel stole her father's images. How can this be explained? There is proof that Laban was an idolater, or, if not an idolater, and knowing the true God, he worshipped the true God by images. This is idolatry. Some charitably think she wanted to take away the cause of her father's sins ; but it is scarcely possible to imagine this is the true solution. If one went into a Roman Catholic chapel, and took from it its superstitious images, the police courts would judge him guilty of theft, though he might assign the reason, that he wanted to take away from the Roman Catholic priest what justly makes him guilty of idolatry. Another explanation is, she concurred in the superstition of her father. Laban divined by his images, in order to know what would be an auspicious or an inauspicious day—where an absent one was, or how a lost relative might be found ; and therefore she took away those images, that the old man might not find out the course that the refugees had taken, and thus recover, by successful pursuit, his property. Another ground, and it is to be feared the real one, was—these images were made of silver and gold, and she, somewhat avaricious like her father, sinned in this instance, as in others, by taking the images as valuable property, as she knew that her father was ready to take away by reprisal all he had given her. If this be the true solution, it revealed a dark trait in the character of the beautiful Rachel.

Laban pursued and overtook the runaways. We must not blame Jacob, the husband ; he did not know of the theft. Rachel, the wife, alone was in fault. She secretly stole them, and told not even her husband ; and therefore he was not guilty of any conspiracy with

her in the theft. Laban said unto Jacob, "And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?" "And Jacob answered and said unto Laban, Because I was afraid; for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me. With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live." This answer was no compliment to Laban, but it was the honest conviction of Jacob's heart, derived from his experimental and personal acquaintance with Laban's character. Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods of Laban, or had possession of them. Rachel, in fact, denied that she had stolen them, and refused, on any terms, to be searched. They were thus not discovered by Laban. Rachel, the unsuspected but real delinquent, refused to be personally examined. Laban, therefore, was obliged to conclude that his gods were not stolen by the parties he had thought guilty. The least that was due, or he could have done, after thus discovering, as it appeared, their innocence, would have been to make apology. Like human nature still, he smoothed over the awkward affair, and proposed a covenant for their future guidance, instead of tendering an apology for past uncharitableness.



Jacob's Quarrel with Esau.



AS Jacob advanced in his journey to meet and, if possible, propitiate Esau, angels ministered to him, as they still minister to the heirs of salvation. The place where the shining troop met him he called, "Mahanaim," "the place of God's hosts." Jacob thus made each stage in his journey a shrine of recollections.

Having to pass through the country of Esau, and expecting, from the exasperated state of his brother's feelings, that there was very little likelihood of his enjoying a quiet and unobstructed route through a wild and now hostile territory, he fell upon the wise and Christian policy of trying to propitiate, instead of making ready to fight, his brother, that thus he might secure, if possible, a peaceful journey through the inhospitable country which Esau, its powerful sheik, then governed. In his arrangements, one discovers a great deal of cunning, or rather, to speak gently, of policy; though perhaps there was cunning as well as tact, for there were grievous defects in Jacob's character. He seems, however, to have had a great fund of shrewd policy, as well as a right estimate of what men were, and how they are to be dealt with, in order to manage them with success. He told his servants, "Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau." He advisedly gave Esau a title of dignity. Jacob, the younger, had got the

blessing—Esau had lost it; but Jacob still addressed Esau as if he, the elder, had obtained what he was entitled to—the blessing—and he, Jacob the younger, had not. He ingeniously covered his designs by a compliment to Esau. Men will often be complimented into good temper, but they will not be coerced into it. “Go and tell to my *lord* Esau, thy *servant* Jacob”—not thy *brother* Jacob, still less thy brother who has got the blessing that he took away from you by deceit—“thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now; and I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and men-servants, and women-servants.” Why does he tell him this? Not, evidently, by way of ostentatious parade of the riches he had amassed, but as a reason why Jacob should not be supposed in his appeal to Esau to be going to ask him for anything. “I am come for one thing only—that I may find grace in thy sight; that is all I ask.” The messengers returned to Jacob, and said, “We came to thy *brother* Esau”—they used different language from their instructions; they say, “thy brother,” not “thy *lord* Esau”—“and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.” They did not state the nature of the reception they met with; but Jacob guessed too rapidly what the four hundred men were likely to attempt by the light of his conscience, for it told him that he had done wrong, and therefore he might well fear. Sin within puts a dark and ominous construction on everything that happens. Even beautiful and beneficent events look gloomy in the light of one’s sin. When the disciples were tossed on the waves, in a dark night and in a tempestuous sea, and when Jesus came, they thought at first it was a spirit, not from any likeness in Jesus to a spectre, but from a sense of their sins; “and they were afraid,” and they could scarcely believe that it was Love come to rescue from a watery grave. The sinner sees goodness through the lurid light of his sins, and misinterprets it, and is alarmed. When one has done wrong, he is tempted to believe that everything, however beneficent,

that betides him in providence, comes to him, not as a mercy from his Father, but as a retribution for his sins from an angry Judge.

The patriarch makes preparation for the conflict. He divided the people with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands. He anticipated battle; he made ready for the worst; but in doing so, one would suppose that, instead of dividing his forces, and allowing them thus more easily to be beaten in detail, he ought rather to have concentrated all his strength, in order to strike a blow the most heavy and most likely to prove successful. If, contrary to what appears, he did not anticipate battle, he may have thought, as he had no hope of success if battle ensued, that an appeal to the compassion of Esau would be more serviceable, and perhaps successful. He therefore sends one band forward, to see how they might be treated. Had he sent all his forces to the front, he feared, no doubt, that all might or would be destroyed; but by risking one half, if they were destroyed, it would be a signal, however sad, to the others to escape as fast as they could, and seek safety in flight.

Before making his last arrangements, he addressed God, as became him, in prayer, and in words truly beautiful and holy:—"O God of my father Abraham"—that is, a covenant God—"and God of my Father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee"—thus pleading God's promise—"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto thy servant." I am most unworthy; I have done nothing to deserve thy favour, I have done everything to forfeit it; I am a miserable sinner; I can only appeal to thy great mercy, who hast thine own set purposes to accomplish in thy providence—to deliver me from the wrath of my brother Esau, whom I have justly offended. He pleaded God's promise, "I will surely do thee good." This forms a very just precedent for us. Prayer ought to precede the use of means.



Jacob's covenant with Laban.—Gen. xxxi. 43—55.

Jacob sent a present, a very handsome present, to Esau. The age was a pastoral age—property was cattle. The present consisted of she-goats, and rams, and camels, and bulls, and she-asses, and foals. He sent Esau this very handsome present, and he so arranged it, that one present should come after another, till Esau should suppose that there was no end to the property he was to receive from successive companies coming up, telling him the reason why they had come from Jacob, and the liberality which they were commissioned by him to exercise. All ended far better than he had expected, as we shall see in the sequel of the history.

Jacob retires from these disturbing incidents for a little. A scene occurs, the memory of which lasted till death. "Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him till the breaking of the day. When the angel saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him." Jacob wrestled with a mysterious being—how, we cannot say—who said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." And Jacob said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." What intense desire for a blessing! "And the angel said unto him, What is thy name?"—not that he was ignorant of it—"And he said, Jacob," which means a supplanter. This mysterious being immediately changed this name, as it arose from a discreditable occurrence, and gave him a more noble one in its stead—"Israel," literally "a man with God," or "a man having power with God." This is the origin of a word that has lasted to this day, and will last while human speech is spoken, or while human recollection survives, or this dispensation runs. Such change of name often occurs in ancient history. In the most interesting history of the patriarch his grandfather, Abram was altered to Abraham, in consequence of a change of circumstances. Sarai was altered to Sarah, from another change of relation. So Jacob is called Israel, by which name he is oftener known in after times.

Jacob, addressing his mysterious antagonist, said, "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name." This being did not tell him what his name was, to satisfy a useless curiosity, but he did what was much better, he blessed him. In the blessing he heard the name of its author. God does not always give what we ask, but He gives what is better than we ask. Paul said, "Remove the thorn from me;" but Christ replied, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Jacob soon found out that this was a divine being, and he called the place Peniel, that is, "the face of God"—"for I have seen God face to face." It was the common impression that for any one to see God was to be destroyed, and therefore he adds, "and my life is preserved."

Many a Peniel have we had, and yet we have not always seen God there. Tabor, and the gates of Damascus, and Patmos, were each a Peniel.

As he travelled on, the patriarch halted upon his thigh. He was wounded, perhaps, to be a memento through life of that mysterious struggle—a sacramental sign and seal of communion with God. The Jews originated from this a practice of their own. Jacob's limb was dislocated, no doubt; but the Jews of their own will kept up a practice which God did not authorize. The Bible always states historic facts, but does not always give those historic facts as precedents for us to imitate.





THE MEETING OF JACOB AND ESAU.

J. P. SHAW & CO., PATERNOSTER ROW.

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The Patriarchal Interview.

ACOB and Esau met at length. Esau, instead of receiving him with the hostility he had most justly provoked, welcomed him with a kindness, a cordiality, and an expression of brotherhood, that did Esau the highest credit, and must have made Jacob feel humbled in the sight of God, and no less ashamed of his unworthy suspicions in the presence of his brother. Jacob, as we have seen, lifted up his eyes, and saw Esau come with four hundred men, who, he was told, accompanied him, and who, he at first thought, were ready to fall upon him, and destroy him ; and accordingly he made arrangements to meet them. He put the handmaids foremost ; then Leah and her children ; then Rachel, the most beloved, and Joseph, the most cared for, in the rear, that they might, if possible, escape, should a catastrophe occur. He approached to Esau, trying fair means first, and bowed himself seven times. Seven is used in Scripture in a vague or wide sense ; it is used in the sense of a great many times, and does not always denote the exact numeral seven. It may have been used on this occasion, to denote several, or a good many times, and so to express the profound respect he felt. He came near to his brother. But what must have been his amazement when he discovered that Esau, who was justly offended by the behaviour of Jacob, who also had been defrauded and provoked by

a gratuitous outrage upon his privileges, his property, and his rights, and had shown on former occasions the deep indignation he felt, ran to meet him, embraced him as a brother, fell upon his neck and kissed him. They both wept—the one from excess of love, the other from a sense of sorrow that he had acted so badly in the past, and now met with treatment so superior to what he deserved or expected in the present. We often judge worse of others than we ought.

Jacob, with all his faults, was the Christian ; and Esau, with all his excellences, was not a Christian. We thereby learn a lesson—that the natural man, unsanctified and unregenerate by the Holy Spirit of God, very often displays beautiful traits of character that must make the most eminent Christian blush, while the Christian often exhibits traits of temper most unworthy of his name, and most dishonouring to his Lord. Esau, who did not pretend to have any religion, showed a spirit of love and forgetfulness of wrongs perfectly lovely, if not divine. Jacob, a Christian, though with great faults, and flaws, and drawbacks, exhibited in some parts of his life a conduct deeply inconsistent with all that becomes the living epistles of Christianity. Some men are formed with a constitution so amiable, that none but the Searcher of hearts can see whether that amiability is the inheritance of nature or the creation of grace. Other men are cast in a mould so rough, and endued with a temperament so explosive, that, even after conversion, one often hesitates to decide that they are Christians at all. They are so destitute of outward gentleness, amiability, and unselfishness, that one is tempted to think no transforming power has yet visited their hearts. Yet there are evidences, invisible to the outward world, that show they are, notwithstanding, under the influence of the grace of God. When two men are brought together, one constitutionally amiable, the other constitutionally irascible and irritable, there may be more of the grace of God in the most irritable than in the most

amiable, though it appears less in the former than in the latter. Grace has, in many a case, an inner work in eradicating and repressing what is bad within, and often is so absorbingly employed in this weary inner labour, that it does not and cannot yet develope its outer action in whatsoever things are fair, and lovely, and just, and of good report. The more we acquaint ourselves with the differences of human nature, and the varieties of human character, and the influences within which the grace of God has to resist as well as develope without, the less we shall be disposed to judge severely—the more we shall be prepared to pray and wait for that great final day, when Esau shall be seen as he is, and Jacob as he is, and we shall know just as we are known.

When Jacob came up to Esau, from whom he had met so unexpected a reception—a reception so vastly better than he anticipated—they all bowed themselves before him. Jacob said, “These are to find grace in the sight of my lord”—not my brother, as if Esau, being the elder, still had the birthright, and ought to be recognized as such. Esau said, “I have enough, my brother;” I do not want any portion of your money, your possessions, or your property. But Jacob prayed him that he would take his blessing—that is, the presents he had brought. In Eastern countries, it is still a mark of deference from an inferior to a superior to give presents; but it is a mark of rudeness, almost of discourtesy, sometimes a sign of hostility, to refuse the presents thus presented.

Esau said to Jacob, “Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee.” Jacob refused, and thus apologized: “My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me, and if men should over-drive them one day, all the flock will die. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant; and I will lead on softly.” Some think this was not perfectly sincere on the part of Jacob; others think that it was justified by the circumstances of the case. Esau was so gracious,

that he offered to be his guide unto Seir, and to conduct him, without any molestation or inconvenience, over his part of the country. Perhaps Jacob suspected Esau after all ; and, though Esau had fallen upon his neck, and shown so great kindness, yet Jacob had a lingering suspicion that all was not sincere, but merely outward, and therefore that he ought not to put himself too much in Esau's power, lest he should betray him. Esau being a man who did not profess religion, and Jacob being a Christian, ever building an altar where he pitched his tent, Jacob may have felt that he ought not, although he was his brother, to be unnecessarily mixed up in his fellowship in the sight of the world. At all events, Jacob did excuse himself, and said that he was not prepared to travel so fast as Esau might be inclined to do ; and therefore he ought to have such time for refreshment and delay as the flocks, the cattle, and the mothers rendered necessary.

Jacob moved onward to Shalem, and there he pitched his tent ; and where he pitched his tent he erected an altar. Wherever man is placed in Providence, whatever man does in his vocation and ministry, a sense of a present God and Father, and a recognition of his sovereignty in all things, ought to be his duty and delight also. In every family, there ought to be maintained family worship. We cannot expect family blessings, unless, as a family, we ask God to bestow them. As individuals, we implore individual blessings in prayer ; as a family, we supplicate family blessings in prayer ; as a nation, we beg for national blessings. In all the associations into which man is cast, either by nature, or by grace, or by Providence, or in fact, these he ought to try to hallow, by asking the blessing and looking for the presence of God our Father in heaven.

Death in Jacob's Family.



JACOB, having forgotten the vows that he had made in his earlier days, is here reminded by God what those vows were, and called upon to return and go back to Bethel, and there fulfil the vows that he had so spontaneously and so heartily made. "So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Beth-el." The place where God appeared to him was called Luz, which means a place of almond-trees, or where almond-trees grow; but Jacob changed its name from Luz, a mere secular or geographical name, into Beth-el, the house of God, a new and sacred name, in remembrance of the blessed scene that swept before his vision there. He thus consecrated the place, and called it no longer by its own ancient name, but by a new, suggestive, and more sacred name. Holy events and reminiscences make holy ground. God's name is, in itself, a sanctuary. "The patriarch built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el," which is, the God of Beth-el. The original means the house of God. But its glory was, "The God of Beth-el." It was not the place that gave it sacredness, but the name of God that lent it its hallowing influence.

Death executes his stern commission in every home. His shadow falls on the brightest firesides, and breaks up circles the most affectionate. He entered the family of Jacob, and there we find

Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died. It is the habit, in Eastern countries, and in some parts of our own country, to give special honour to a nurse, and properly so. The nurse of the family was of old a very important personage. Deborah evidently accompanied Rebekah in all her wanderings as a confidential and trusted servant; and when she died, she was sorrowed over as a loved, and so far lost, domestic. So greatly was her loss felt, that the place where she was buried was called, "The oaks of weeping—Allonbachuth," so poignant was the sorrow felt at her burial. There is something very beautiful in this. In modern society, the servant is too much treated as a machine, and the master acts too much as the mere governor of the machine. The servant receives so much, and the master pays so much, and concludes he is to exact as much in return as he can for the wages he pays; and when they have each fulfilled his compact, both feel there is an end of the connection. The consequence of this is much depravity and contempt in both extremes of society. A family—master, and mistress, and servants—ought to be a congregation or a church. While every one is to occupy his proper place, and to show the deference and to discharge the duties that belong to that place, yet there should not be so much of the mercenary and so little of the affectionate in their intercourse and communion with each other. There is a duty besides wages that the master owes to his servants, and there is an allegiance besides work that the servant owes to his master; and in proportion as the Christian element pervades our families, will right feeling, true deference, and high-toned courtesy—for that ought to be its air—prevail among us.

It is very beautiful to see this royal family—for Jacob was a sheik, or prince—descending to show its true humanity by weeping over the loss of a faithful and attached domestic. Death, however, has no sooner struck down a servant, than he numbers with his victims the beloved Rachel. Who can forget her words, "Give me children, or I die?" Her wish was granted, and her death was the result of

the fulfilment of her wish. It is not always the highest temporal good when God grants our earnest wishes ; it is often in great mercy that He withholds them. We know not what is good for us. When we ask in the language of remonstrance and complaint, or repining, and obtain, we rarely obtain a blessing with the gift. "Thy will be done," is our best prayer. Rachel called the name of her child, "Benoni, the son of my sorrow ;" for hers was the baptism of sorrow and tears. But Jacob, lest the dark shadow from the tomb of the departed Rachel, and the deep distress that he felt for the loss of one for whom he served seven years, and so loved, should be perpetuated as a presence undiluted, ever sad and ever sorrowful, in the name of his son, changed it from Benoni, which his mother had given him, as expressive of her sorrow, and called him "Benjamin, the son of my right hand," that is, who shall be a joy and a support to me—a change of name also intended, in all likelihood, to dissociate and detach the growing son from the painful and melancholy history of his birth. "Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Beth-lehem. And Jacob set a pillar on her grave ;" to commemorate one he so loved, for whom he so sacrificed, whose sins were forgiven, while recorded as beacons to us, and whose excellences are still perpetuated for the instruction of the daughters of Israel.

Soon after, "Isaac gave up the ghost." It is somewhat singular that we hear so little of Isaac in his later years. He seems not only to have become blind long before this, but to have been detached very much from intercourse with the world, and to have spent his declining years in solitude, or in domestic quiet. "He was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days ;" and it is recorded, as in another case which occurred on a previous occasion, that Esau and Jacob, merging and forgetting their recent quarrels, buried him. The two brothers who so sadly quarrelled while their father lived, gathered together round

his dead dust, and quenched their enmities and animosities in a flood of tears, as they bore his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, and left there his silent dust in the hope of the resurrection.

In the midst of these scenes and sufferings, God appeared to Jacob, and renewed to him his covenant: "And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone; and he poured a drink-offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Beth-el." The being who wrestled with Jacob was called an angel; but on this occasion this angel was shown to be God; for "Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He," that is, God, "talked with him;" and therefore it was not a created angel whom he worshipped with any sort or degree of religious homage, but God Himself. This is told us very distinctly in one of the prophets—namely, in Hosea, where it is said that Jacob "took his brother by the heel, and by his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Beth-el, and there he spake with us; even the Lord God of hosts; the Lord is his memorial."





Joseph's Coat brought to Jacob.

The Forgetful not Forgotten.



OD said unto Jacob, "Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there; and make there an altar unto God." The simple history of this incident is recorded in the chapter where God is stated to have appeared to Jacob at the top of the ladder, and Jacob to have called the place Beth-el, while he vowed a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God; and this stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God's house; and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee." This solemn vow the patriarch made in the fulness of his grateful heart. God now calls this to his mind, and tells him to go and perform that vow. During all the time that had elapsed—a very great number of years—since Jacob uttered this vow, to the day when God addressed to him these words, God had fulfilled every promise He had made, and had bestowed upon him every mercy He had pledged. Not one jot or tittle had fallen from the least word that God had spoken; all, and more than all, had come to pass. Had Jacob remained faithful on his part? Did he remember his vow? Did he recollect all he had pledged and promised at Bethel? Did he return to Bethel as he

said he would? Did he there build an altar, and dedicate and consecrate it as a memorial to God? Surely the distinguishing mercies he tasted were not wholly forgotten; surely so splendid a Peniel had not parted with its brightness, or ceased to make any impression upon the patriarchal mind. Alas! the promised altar was not yet built, the solemn vows were not yet performed. Jacob had forgotten alike his vows, his mercies, and his duties; and if God had not reminded him of them on this occasion, he had probably forgotten them altogether.

The patriarch had not only forgotten his great mercies, but his solemn vows also. Mercies are expressions of God's love to us, vows are the expressions of our allegiance and devotedness to Him. A vow is a spontaneous utterance. We become subjects of mercies often without our own choice or request, but we never make vows unless by our own deliberate and spontaneous decision. Jacob having received great mercies, in the exuberance of his gratitude, in the full flow of a noble and a Christian feeling, vowed to God, that if God would fulfil all his promises to him, and would do all He pledged, he would give a tithe of all he had, he would return to Bethel, build an altar there, and serve the God who had renewed his youth through all his life hereafter. But Jacob's remembrance of his vows, like his impressions of God's mercies, had faded from his memory; or if he recollected them, what was worse, he felt it was inconvenient to fulfil them. How truly does Jacob represent us all in this respect! Have we not vowed, and forgotten our vows? We have been laid low by sickness; the prospect of death, and judgment, and eternity has loomed in the horizon—the hopes of restoration have become few, and faint, and far between. We recalled our past sins; we implored forgiveness; we made solemn vows. Has our renewed life been all we vowed? It has fallen far short, and we feel we are guilty and ungrateful.

How merciful is God to the least deserving! He might have

said of Jacob, "He has forgotten me, I will now forget him. He has left me, I will leave him. He has fallen asleep, let him sleep till he sleep the sleep of death." God's ways are not our ways. The sheep goes astray from the fold, but the shepherd still goes after him; the prodigal is feeding upon husks, and mocking at the recollection of his father's home, but the father is on the house-top looking out for him: Jacob has forgotten God, but God has not forgotten Jacob.

Though we fail to remember God's mercies to us, He never forgets that He has bestowed them. He comes to the fig-tree every year, seeking fruit corresponding to the sunbeams and the showers that have fallen on it, and the fine soil in which it has been planted; and finding none, He resolves to cut it down, as it deserves. But He is slow to punish; He comes to it three successive years seeking fruit, before He issues the last and fatal mandate, "Cut it down;" and even when He cuts it down, it is not indignation so much at the tree, as because it is a cumberer of the ground, and injures other trees—as if here, as still, the mercy of God gleamed in the blackest cloud that can be charged with deadliest judgments, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Now, He might so have visited Jacob, and cut him off; but He did not do so. His ways are not our ways; his love is not contingent upon ours; He loved us before we loved Him, and loves us long after we have forgotten and forsaken Him.

We all need such mementos as those which God gave to Jacob. That affliction which overtakes us, and spreads over us a dark and mysterious shadow, points back to some vow we have left unperformed, or some past mercies for which we are not thankful. That affliction which comes, we know not whence and we know not why, is to remind us of some duties that remain still to be discharged, of some mercies we have ceased to be thankful for. But even when affliction does come, let it always remind us that it comes from God,

and that it has as definite and beneficent an end as the potion prescribed by the physician—it is sent for the cure of some disease, or to remind us of some neglected duty, or to recall some forgotten vow, or to soften the heart, that it may become sensible of some great mercy in the past to which it has been too long hardened.

The patriarch forthwith addressed his whole household, and required all to come and do what was necessary to carry out God's behests. He used all the influence of a king, a parent, and a master, to enforce, as far as Christian authority could enforce, the duties that devolved upon his subjects and children under him. He required all to put down their idols, whatever those might be, and however great the sacrifice. Jacob, having thus reformed his house, and afterwards discharged his obligations to God, calls to memory God's rich mercy—"the God who answered me in the day of my distress." The thought was buried in the heart of the patriarch, but it was not dead. Therefore, the instant a Divine word reminded him, the rush of his past recollections revealed to him how good God had been, whilst the contrast proved too painfully the inadequacy of the return of gratitude and service he had made to God—"the God that answered me in my distress."

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm."



Joseph and his Brothers.



THE history of Joseph is one of the most touching and beautiful biographies that were ever written. It still charms the young, instructs the aged, and preaches to the very heart and conscience of mankind. It is always fresh, and will continue so till the last generation of readers has passed away.

Much in Joseph's history was typical of much in that of Joseph's Lord. But all of it is rich in practical instruction to those who have ears to hear and hearts to feel the wonderful and gracious ways of God.

Jacob had twelve sons, of whom the youngest and best beloved were Joseph and Benjamin, the sons of Rachel. Of Joseph, as the most prominent and most excellent, we have the fullest account. His biography commences with the statement, "Joseph brought unto his father the evil report of his brethren." This was not a malevolent and spiteful habit. We cannot suppose it was the reprehensible and very common practice of bringing little tales of little doings to his father, because his temper was bad, but that the brethren of Joseph, whose whole history indicates a bad and unsanctified character, lived in the practice of gross and scandalous sin, which a better brother grieved at. Joseph, having a purer taste, a loftier nature, and much Christian principle to regulate and guide him, brought to his father, what must have been painful to himself,

but what was needful for their correction—an account of their crimes and their misconduct, in order that disastrous consequences might, if possible, be averted, and that they might be influenced for the better.

“Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age.” But whilst it was natural for the father to love the son for his great piety, it was indiscreet in him to show that he entertained a peculiar and disproportionate affection for him in the eyes of the rest of his family. It too generally happens, that when parents show, not false, but excessive love to one child, the rest of the children become jealous, and unjustly feel towards the child who is peculiarly beloved, animosities that ought not to be cherished in the bosoms of brethren. The father, Israel or Jacob, might have loved Joseph specially, which he could not help doing; but he ought to have suppressed the manifestations of his excessive love, as far as he could. Instead of so acting, Israel or Jacob, evidently with great imprudence, gave to the son whom he loved most a distinctive badge or mark of his affection, called “a coat of many colours.”

His brethren seeing, just as might have been expected, the excessive partiality that Jacob thus showed to his son, envied and hated him the more, “and could not even speak peaceably unto him.” In this case, jealousy rose to such a pitch, that not only did they not love Joseph, but they could not pay him the ordinary compliments of courtesy—“they could not speak peaceably unto him.” If Jacob had reflected, as he ought to have done, he would have seen that, having children of different mothers, the certainty of mutual animosity and jealousy would be inevitable, if he showed discriminating partiality to one more than to the rest.

After this “Joseph dreamed a dream,” in which he saw his sheaf arise, and the sheaves of his brethren “stood round about, and made obeisance to his sheaf;” and also another dream, in which he saw “the sun, and the moon, and the eleven

stars" make obeisance to him. Both of these dreams suggested the obvious interpretation, that his brethren, his father, and all his relatives, should one day give deference, and make obeisance to him; in other words, that he should be exalted to some lofty distinction or honour, and that they, like subjects, should render marks and expressions of fealty and subjection to him.

Joseph, perhaps, did wrong in telling them his dreams, unless he was commanded by God to do so. Nobody likes to be told beforehand that they will be subject to one who is their younger and inferior; and if it was not his duty to tell his dreams, certainly it was not expedient to do so. As it was, he added to and aggravated that feeling of discontent and dissatisfaction which his brethren nursed, till their envy gained commanding power in their hearts and conduct. While "his brethren envied him, his father observed the saying," and evidently understood that the dream was not a random guess, or a mere fanciful conjecture, but an inspiration from on high, that would one day be translated into fact.

In these patriarchal days, dreams, in the absence of a written revelation, were the usual vehicles of divine instruction; and hence the apostle says, "God, who at sundry times"—that is, in the patriarchal and antediluvian times—"and in divers manners"—dreams and visions—"spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

Joseph's brethren were tending their flocks in Shechem, and Jacob called Joseph, and bade him go and see whether it were well with them. After seeking them for some time, Joseph came to his brethren; but their first feelings towards him were very different from what he had reason to expect, or what his brethren owed. He thought he was going to brothers; he found that he was approaching fratricides. Their animosity in secret had grown to such a height and strength, that their first impulse was to kill him. "They said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh;" and therefore, when

he came, they were prepared, and ready—at least, the majority of them—to kill him. He was sent by his father to serve them, but instead of welcoming, they received him in a way that brothers should not receive a brother. One, however, more tender and feeling than the rest, Reuben, heard it, and he “delivered him out of their hands;” that is, he attempted to do so, “and said, Let us not kill him, shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness.” It is evident that he did not mean by this proposal that he should pine away or die in the pit, but that he should have some unknown and quiet opportunity of taking him out, and restoring him to his father; for “Reuben returned unto the pit; and behold Joseph was not in the pit: and he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?” This shows that Reuben meant in the end to deliver Joseph; yet he was very guilty, for he voted with the majority to get rid of him for the present. His conduct was criminal, though his heart was more sensitive than the hearts of his brethren.

After they had placed Joseph in the pit, “they sat down to eat bread; and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and behold a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery, and balm, and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites.” He thought that would be a better way than killing him. I do not believe this was tenderness on the part of Judah, but that he was anxious to make the most he could by Joseph. He therefore resolved not to kill him, which would be the most cruel, and what he thought was the least profitable way, and said, “Sell him to the Ishmeelites;” and they did so, and received twenty pieces of silver, and the Ishmeelites took Joseph into Egypt.

When one commits one sin, by a law lasting as the stars, one

must commit another to hide it. No man commits only one sin, when he sins at all ; it needs additional ones to conceal a previous one, or to render void or arrest the consequences of it. These brethren got rid of Joseph, they did not murder him. They sold him to the Ishmeelite merchants, killed a kid, and dipped Joseph's distinctive coat in its blood, and sent it to their father, and assured him, by the use of the most infamous lie, and with a cruelty that one can find no expression strong enough to denounce, that they had accidentally found the coat in this condition ; wishing him to believe that, in their efforts to rescue Joseph from the fangs of a wild beast, the coat was all they could secure from its fangs.

St. Luke informs us, in the Acts of the Apostles, that "the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt." But, no doubt, much of the persecution he endured was on account of his superior character. It is the law of this life that all excellence is envied ; and the higher men rise in this world, in any sphere, the deeper and the broader is the shadow of envy that is projected around them. We cannot be Christians without paying the penalty. A Christian cannot pass through this world, to use the language of the road, toll free ; he must suffer because he is a Christian. Through much tribulation, in some shape, we must enter into the kingdom of heaven.

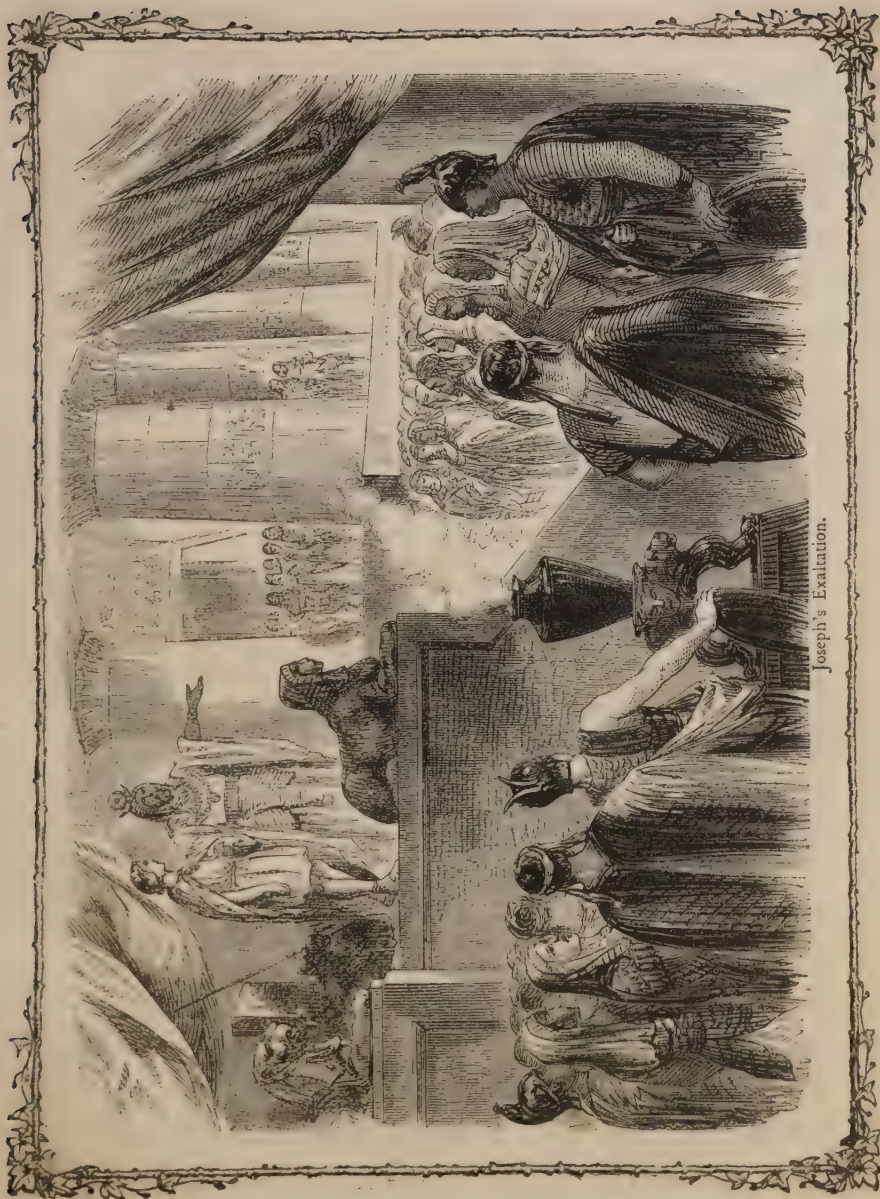
The passion felt towards Joseph was, as we have ascertained, that of envy, really and truly the most irrational, the most absurd, one might almost add the most criminal, of all passions. It is not a fair and proper ambition to better one's self—which is legitimate enough—but a malicious and malignant desire to destroy the prosperity of one's neighbour. It is not complaining that we are so low, but it is being exasperated because a brother is so successful.

Let us never treat moral evil in the heart as insignificant. It begins first as a very trivial thing, but it grows by indulgence till

it becomes very powerful. The first emotion of jealousy or uncharitableness may be easily crushed ; but, when wilfully cherished, it seems to fix its grasp more firmly, till, instead of our having control over it, we are moved by it, and carried headlong as Satan, its author, may lead, seduce, or guide us. Crush the reptile in its egg ; let us ask, not only that God would change the heart, but that He would deliver us from evil, and lead us not into temptation.

His brethren were against Joseph, but, in the language of Luke, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, "God was with him." As we study his interesting biography, we shall see this most strikingly exhibited. We shall see many adversaries—man against him, woman against him, Satan against him, powers and principalities against him ; but we shall discover, by unmistakable marks, that "God was with him," and therefore that the victory was his. His brethren cruelly persecuted him ; but their conduct was overruled by God to be mercy to themselves and elevation to him. Their very wrath aided him. If they had not done as they did, the elevation of Joseph, which was their safety, would not have been accomplished. They sold him to the Midianite merchants, in order to prevent the realization of his dream ; and that very sale was overruled by God to his elevation to the right hand of Pharaoh, and to his administration of all the treasures of Egypt.

If God be with us, who can be against us ? Everything, apparently, at this stage of Joseph's biography, was working for evil to him ; but when enabled to take a retrospect of the whole of his life, we see that everything was working for good to him ; and Joseph experienced what we know, that if our faces are set in the right direction, all things will fall into beautiful array. Things are not only quiescent and unobstructive, but are active—they *work* ; and not only active, but harmoniously active—they *work together* ; and not only harmoniously active, but beneficently active—they



Joseph's Exaltation.

work together *for good* to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose. Holy hands will help God's people, heavenly light will shine upon their steps, an Almighty shield will be over them; and all will find that each believer is immortal till he has finished the sublime mission God has assigned him on earth.



Joseph falsely Accused.

JOSEPH was sold a slave into Egypt. Though exalted to honour in the house of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, he was still a slave—exalted and dignified, but still a slave purchased by Pharaoh's officers, and liable to be sold by him to others when it suited his convenience. What excellence must have been inherent in his character, when, in the worst or least propitious of circumstances, his excellence broke forth, while his conduct so commended him to the approbation of his master, that he was exalted to the highest and most influential position in all the household of Potiphar. Such is the force of real and intrinsic worth.

The whole house of Potiphar was blessed for Joseph's sake. Here is evidence, and it is not a solitary one, for it is often discovered in Scripture, that a good man in a household, or a kingdom, or a province, or a court, proves a blessing to it—conducting away judgments, and bringing down blessings. We know not how often the few and the far-between good men that pray and serve God in secret may have warded off the judgment which our nation may have deserved, and drawn down the blessings it had justly forfeited. Sodom was spared as long as a Lot was in it; Jerusalem was safe whilst the Christians were there; and only after Lot had escaped from Sodom, and the Christians had fled from Jerusalem to Pella, did

the judgments of God descend, overwhelm, and destroy these guilty capitals. How desirable that Christian men should be found on every ledge of social life ! How important that such should command our armies, and be at the head of our navies—in royal courts and high places—that wherever there is an element of power, there should be a Christian heart to love it, and a Christian hand to wield it. So God will bless courts, nations, and kingdoms, for the sake of the Josephs, or the good and wise that are in them.

How beautiful ! how divine ! was the exclamation of Joseph, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ?” What an overwhelming incentive to good is in that deep conviction ! What a powerful preventive of evil !

We have a picture in the inspired narrative, purely but truly drawn, of the shameless profligacy of the wife of Potiphar—not, I fear, solitary in the world’s history. When an angel falls, the angel becomes a fiend. The corruption of the best thing is always the worst. When a man falls, he becomes bad enough, God knows ; but when a woman falls, she becomes worst of all. It seems as if the depth to which one falls were proportionate to the height on which the creature originally stood. In man, seduction is vile ; in woman, it is inexpressibly so. When Potiphar’s wife failed to seduce, in order to gratify vile desires, her impure passions kindled into fierce and impetuous revenge. She would kill because she could not corrupt. So different is lust from love ; and therefore she speaks in language fitted to provoke and irritate Potiphar, when alluding to Joseph, she says, “He hath brought in an Hebrew”—this contemptible Jew, this foreigner—“to mock us, and turn us into unutterable contempt.” How sorrowful are such incidents ! Yet there is forgiveness with God.

Sins are never single ; they follow one another, or exist together. The roots by which they cohere may not be seen by us, but real and actual they unquestionably are. He who does one sin is dragged

into many more, unless from his lowered position he repent, is forgiven, and restored. There must be the falsehood to screen a first sin, and the hypocrisy to mislead and deceive those who do not suspect it. Joseph, notwithstanding his incorruptible virtue, was cast into prison. Innocence in Egypt was condemned. It was the wife of Potiphar who ought to have^{be} been in prison; but often the guiltless suffer at the instigation of the guilty in this world. Defeated passions are terrible furies, unscrupulous as terrible. If this were the dispensation of retribution, virtue would always be on the throne, and vice would always be on the scaffold; but as in this world light and darkness are mixed, there is retribution enough to show us that God reigns, but confusion enough to prove that this is not the day of judgment. The innocent suffer for a season—not always, even here—and the guilty escape for a short season.

Nothing more painful could have happened to Joseph than to be accused of a vile crime of which he was consciously innocent, and for it to be visited with punishment altogether undeserved. Yet he conducted himself with a quiet, silent, beautiful reserve, which in the sight of all shed the lustre of heaven on his head. Nothing is more difficult to be borne than false accusations, except, it may be, undeserved punishment; it needs a great deal of grace to suffer and be silent. That man will indeed have to be thankful to God who passes through the world without some mud cast upon his good name. But when we cannot answer the accusation that is evil by a thorough reply, from want of opportunity, we can live it down. One of the most effective replies to a calumny is living it down; but it needs a great deal of grace, a great deal of patience, and no little magnanimity to persevere. It is only a few heroes in the world, or martyr Christians in the Church, who can bide their own and their Father's time. Joseph did so. He said nothing; he was satisfied there was a God, who would right what was wrong, and avenge

his reproach, and bring forth his righteousness like the noon-day. He suffered, and was silent; he had the vivid mark of the most exalted Christianity.

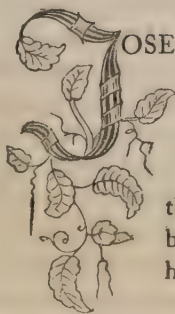
He was cast into prison, a supposed criminal—a punishment he did not deserve; but even there, and in so unfavourable circumstances, it was impossible his superior and supernatural excellence should long remain hidden. It was irrepressible then—it is so still. It seems, however, from the jailer treating Joseph with unexpected leniency, and placing so much in his hand, that the jailer did not do so of his own prompting, or altogether from what he saw of Joseph. Potiphar seems to have had strong impression—as, indeed, the very facts of the case, if one might enter into them fully, would demonstrate—that Joseph was falsely accused, that his wife was the guilty one, and privately, perhaps, he conveyed this, his own impression, to the jailer; for the jailer acted, in his treatment of a prisoner slave, in a way that can only be explained upon the supposition, that the jailer's instructions from his master were, to receive Joseph as a prisoner, that outward appearances might be saved, but to treat him as a friend and innocent servant, as Joseph truly deserved. At the same time, in prison “the Lord was with Joseph, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed all to Joseph's hand.” God was with him in the palace; God was with him in the prison; God was with him when he was looked upon as all that was great and good; God was with him when he was accused and charged with the greatest crime. Man changes with circumstances; God never. God is with his own in palace and in prison, in light and in darkness; for He has promised, “I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee.”

Joseph was happy in a dungeon, because his conscience was at peace in his breast. His “feet were bound with fetters: he was laid in irons;” but his soul was free, and it

reposed sweetly and securely in the sunshine of the countenance of God. After all, true religion is real peace. Sooner or later, it gives a satisfaction which more than compensates for outward trouble. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in Me ye shall have peace."



Joseph the Interpreter in Prison.



JOSEPH was still in the dungeon in which Potiphar had placed him for the crime of which he was accused, and supposed to be guilty, but of which he was altogether innocent. It happened soon that the solitude of the dungeon was at least relieved by the imprisonment of the chief butler and chief baker, two of the great officers of the royal household, who had given some offence to their master.

The word "butler" is translated in Nehemiah "cup-bearer;" and perhaps this is the just and proper translation of it, and best conveys what it meant in ancient times. It was the duty of the butler to present the wine at the banquet, which in this case was unintoxicating, for he squeezed the grapes into the cup he offered to his master. This was his dignity and duty; it was also a responsible office.

The other officer was the baker, whose office it was to prepare the bread and meats for his master. These two persons were cast into prison along with Joseph. Neither of their names is given, nor are their crimes specified. The silence of Scripture here is remarkable. They are introduced as facts that occurred in providential history, of no intrinsic value in themselves, in order to bring out a new feature in Joseph's character, a new fact in Joseph's biography. Their names are of no value; the knowledge of their crimes might

gratify our curiosity, but it could convey no instruction ; they are therefore omitted. Often one has reason to see the inspiration of the sacred writer in his silence, as clearly as in his eloquence or utterance.

For some crime, real or supposed, they were cast into prison along with Joseph. We can well conceive how differently the prison felt to each of these three persons. The two criminals, really guilty, felt it to be a prison ; but Joseph's conscious innocence lighted up the darkness of that prison with more than the splendour of a royal palace. It is not darkness, nor bolts, nor bars, nor three-feet thick walls that make a prison ; it is the prisoner's consciousness of crime that constitutes a real dungeon ; but where no such consciousness of crime exists, there, as in the case of Bunyan, and as in the case of saints and martyrs, of whom the world was not worthy, all the misery of a prison feels comparatively light. The severest pains feel gentle when there is a conscience at peace with God, and the lightest injury feels painful and poignant when the heart is not right with Him. The bosom is the true prison or palace.

The butler, or cup-bearer, and the baker, dreamed dreams. This, one would suppose, is so perfectly natural, as not to deserve notice ; but it seems that the dreams made an impression upon each so extraordinary, that they formed the opinion that it must be a symbol or hieroglyph fraught with some extraordinary meaning ; it was the depth of the impression of the recollected dreams that made them so anxious to ascertain what was their meaning—for meaning and mission they felt they had. Their hearts were depressed, their countenances were sad ; they were sure that more was meant than met the eye in the night-vision, and they were, therefore, anxious to understand it.

How very natural that the cup-bearer should dream of wine, and of presenting it in a cup to his master. How likely that the baker should dream of making bread, and carrying it on his head.

It was natural. Generally our daily duties are woven into our night-dreams ; and what the heart has nearest and closest to it, is what is most frequently reflected to us from the land of dreams in the silent watches of the night. Other dreams recorded in the Bible were so directly the creation of the Spirit of God, that one can see that they had no connection with the employment of the persons, but were independent vehicles of divine lessons which God designed them to understand.

Joseph, when he saw them in the morning looking so sad, with that thorough courtesy which is ever the creation of true Christianity, asked, in deep sympathy, and no doubt with real sorrow, "Why are you looking so sad? Is there any service I can render you? Is there anything I can do for you? Let me know." The two prisoners saw such transparent honesty in that youth's inquiry, that they at once felt confidence in him, and told him that they had each dreamed a dream, and that they were perplexed by a desire to know the meaning of it. Why so perplexed? The unknown is always feared. When we know the worst, we can, as it were, prepare ourselves to meet and master it ; but when the unknown is before us, our consciences, not at ease, and our imaginations, ever ready to fancy strange things where there is no fact to guide it, and no footing for it to rest on, expect that all will be disaster, because all is unknown. An unknown God is ever a dreaded God. It was to the unknown God that the altar for the worst sacrifices was erected of old.

Joseph presented himself as the interpreter of these dreams, not by assuming any wisdom or personal genius, but simply by reason of that communion and direction from God which, as God's minister, he was privileged with. He said, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" Is it not the prerogative of Him who sends the dream to send also the interpretation of the dream?

The butler or cup-bearer first of all narrated his dream. The

remarkable part of his dream was, not the natural history of it, but the rapidity with which he saw the bud come into the blossom, the blossom into the fruit, the fruit into the clusters, and the clusters into the ripe grapes. The thing that struck the butler with amazement, as most significant, was the speed of the process. It was as if it all at once budded, blossomed, bore fruitage, ripened, and then was by him squeezed or pressed into the cup of Pharaoh. Joseph interpreted it at once. "Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place." His interpretation could not have been a guess. Why should he guess that the "three branches" are three days? Why not three months, three years, three centuries? The very interpretation that he gave, and the decision with which he gave it, showed that he was inspired from on high: and the fulfilment of the prophecy was proof that his interpretation was right.

"The three branches are three days." Here is a very important function, I may observe, of the word "is" or "are." It is evident that the word "are" is used in the sense of "signify"—"the three branches are, or signify, three days." Does it not, then, seem natural to understand these words, "This is my body," in the same way as we understand this clause in Joseph's interpretation, namely, "This signifies my body?" Nobody would imagine that Joseph meant that these three branches were transubstantiated into three days; and no one but one who wished to justify the decisions of supposed infallible councils previously given would ever think of changing the words, "This is my body," into "This is transubstantiated into my body."

Having rendered this service to the butler, Joseph asked, as the only favour he desired, that the butler would think of him when he was raised to prosperity. This was a truly human and touching appeal. Joseph had sown spiritual good; he asked a little temporal in return.

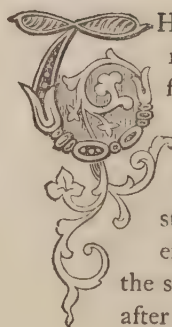


The Cup found in Benjamin's Sack.

Then the chief baker came, no doubt concluding that, since the butler's dream had received such a favourable interpretation, his also must have a favourable meaning. He said, "Behold, I had three white baskets on my head." In eastern lands, bread and most other things are carried on the head. He said, "In the uppermost basket there was all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head." Joseph gave him the interpretation of this, and doubtless with unfeigned sorrow; but it was his duty not to accommodate his interpretations to individual tastes, and, like the ancient oracles, to tell what would please best those who could pay most, but to speak what was truth, whether palatable or painful; and therefore he said, "Within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee." This was literally and strictly fulfilled. It is added, in language most eloquent, because so simple, and so descriptive of what man is—the recipients of the greatest mercies often feeling the least grateful, and almost illustrating the common aphorism, that the way to lose a man's friendship is to do him some service—"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him." But Joseph had not forgotten One who said, "A mother may forget her sucking child, yet will I not forget thee."



Pharaoh's Dreams.



HE two chief servants of Pharaoh thus dreamed, and received the interpretation of their dreams from their fellow-prisoner, Joseph. Kings must sleep, as well as the meanest of their subjects, or the lowest of their servants; and the dreams that visit weary workmen and servants during sleep are not strangers to royal minds, when reposing after the exercise of their powers, exhausted by the cares of the state, any more than to the mind of the working man after the toils of the field.

Pharaoh dreamed that "he stood by the river." The mention of the word is evidence of the locality. "The river" was the name which Egyptians ordinarily gave to the Nile, the great source of fertility and prosperity, and of their hope of plenteous harvests. It appears that seven lean kine came out of the banks, or the rank sedge or grass upon the river's bank, where the crocodile is now found watching for his prey; and that these seven lean cattle devoured the seven fat cattle also visible. The ox is still found upon the ancient monuments of Egypt as the hieroglyph of agricultural produce. Pharaoh, therefore, could easily see that the dream so connected with oxen or cattle was in some way related to the agricultural prospects and harvests of the land. He dreamed a second dream, and in this dream he saw seven ears of corn, very

thin and blasted with the east wind, and these devoured the seven full ears that appeared beside them. In the Egyptian wheat, one stem rises from the earth, and seven, eight, or nine different ears all start up from it. This is a sort of wheat which we do not possess, unless the specimens of mummy wheat recently imported should be of this kind. It is necessary that we should understand this peculiarity of Egyptian wheat, in order to comprehend what seems so unnatural—seven ears of corn growing up from one root, or parent-stem.

It was but a dream—often a meaningless thing. But why should Pharaoh be troubled by a dream? It is a singular fact, that the most infidel men are invariably the most superstitious. Herod is an instance. The men who talk so proudly against the very existence of a God are generally most given to all sorts of superstitious notions—to dreams, to magic, to fortune-telling, and other absurdities too familiar and too dear to numbers of mankind; and Pharaoh showed that even he, who was really a heathen, and did not believe in a personal God, although he may have believed in the idolatries of Egypt, was just as superstitious as the lowest of his subjects. He therefore believed, and in this instance truly, that a dream so strange, so deep in its impression, and so repeated—the varied imagery of which, however, conveyed the same common impression—must have a meaning, and he must be at the bottom of it.

In order to find out its interpretation, he had recourse to the accustomed and official interpreters, whose celebrity was great. The magi, or the magicians of Egypt, had a twofold character. They were, first of all, priests who ministered at the altars of their gods. Among these, for instance, was the priest of On, that is, the priest of the sun. They were also wise men, or philosophers, who gave their opinions upon questions of state or policy, and even ventured to tell fortunes, or to interpret dreams. To these wise men or magi, therefore, the king had recourse; but he found they were utterly unable to explain his dreams. They

could not guess what they could mean ; all their arts proved useless ; they could not give him any interpretation, natural or satisfactory.

At this crisis the butler makes his appearance in the character of an ungrateful and miserable sycophant. In prison Joseph asked him the little favour, that when he escaped, he would remember him in the presence of his master ; but not one syllable did he utter to his master about poor Joseph. For the captive patriarch he cared nothing, and only when there was a chance of bettering himself, and of making the king feel that his servant the butler could do him a good turn, did he say, " I do remember my faults this day." His greatest fault, that of ingratitude, he did not remember ; his other fault, for which the king punished him, he professed at least to remember. He therefore excused himself, and apologized for so unworthy a person approaching so sacred a majesty. He said nothing in favour of Joseph in order to do Joseph good ; he merely told the king that Joseph was a clever interpreter of dreams, in order that the king might be thankful to the butler for giving him useful information, rather than to Joseph, who might or might not succeed in interpreting his dreams. The butler told the king the reason he knew that Joseph was so good an interpreter ; he had interpreted his and the baker's dreams, and the results showed the accuracy of his interpretation.

Joseph, thus commended, was rescued from prison, and brought into Pharaoh's presence. All seemed to be the mere result of man's volition ; it was, every inch of it, the preparation of God. Chance has no place in the divine programme. Accident is not even a peg on which an event hangs. Were such unadmitted things allowed to intrude, the action and harmony of nature and grace would be disturbed.

There is one thing very humbling to man, very glorifying to God. When we read history, not as man writes it, but as God's amanuenses write it, we can discover that while man on the lower platform seems to be the sovereign power directing all, he is really

in God's hand, and but the humble instrument, guided, overruled, and restrained as God may be pleased to use him.

When Joseph was spoken to on the subject of this interview, he took no credit to himself, but at once gave God the glory. He then tells him why the dream was twice repeated—namely, to show the greater certainty of it. Joseph said, "The seven good kine are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years, and the seven thin and ill-favoured kine that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine. Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, and there shall arise after them seven years of famine, and the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of the famine following; and it shall be very grievous. Now, therefore, let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt."

Pharaoh forthwith appointed Joseph to be his prime-minister, and invested him with all the insignia of office, and, by way of reward, gave Joseph in marriage, "Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah, priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt." Whether she became a Christian or not, we cannot say; but that Joseph, a Christian, accepted her as his wife, is matter of record. The priest of On means the priest of the sun, which, with the moon, the stars, the Nile, and the beasts of the Nile, were severally regarded by the Egyptians as gods.

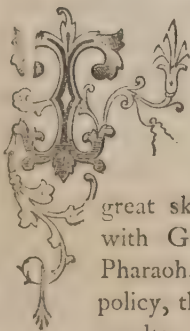
"Pharaoh gives to Joseph his ring. This was an act of investiture, such as is not entirely foreign to the usages of Europe in the middle ages." There are many representations of rings found on the monuments of Egypt, showing that they were employed to convey authority. With reference to Joseph's being arrayed in vesture of fine linen, such fine linen, proved to be so by careful chemical analysis, is found at this day wrapped round mummies; and some instances of cotton have been also found

amongst Egyptian remains. Pharaoh also put a gold chain about Joseph's neck. There are frequent engravings on the monuments, all showing royal personages putting chains round the necks of persons whom they invested with authority, and raised to eminence. Pharaoh changed Joseph's name to an Egyptian name. Our version gives it, Zaphnath-Paaneah. The Septuagint gives it, Psonthom-phanech, and Josephus, Psotom-phanech. Egyptian scholars recognize in it, along with other meanings, the Egyptian word, Psotomfeneh, meaning "the salvation," or the "saviour of the age." It is also said that Pharaoh married Joseph to Asenath. The meaning of this name has been doubted; but the most frequent interpretation is, "one belonging to Isis." She was the daughter, we are told, of Potipherah, priest of On. The word *priest*, in the margin of our version, is translated *prince*; but the priests of Egypt, being set over cities, were frequently the princes of the day, and were regarded as councillors by the king.

During the seven years of plenty, Joseph collected the fruits of the earth, and laid them up. At Beni Hassan, in the tomb of Amenembe, there is a painting of a great storehouse, before the door of which lies a large heap of grain, already winnowed. The measurer fills a bushel, in order to pour it out into the sacks of those who carry the grain to the granary. The bearers go to the door of the storehouse, and lay down their sacks before an officer, who stands ready to receive the corn. This is the owner of the storehouse. Near by stands the bushel with which it is measured, and the registrar who takes the account.

It is most interesting to see how all recent discoveries confirm the facts of the Bible, and how things doubted by sceptics are brought out with a clearness and a fulness in the providence of God, that show to demonstration, that when we find difficulties in the Bible, it is not evidence that the Bible is wrong, but instruction to wait till God gives us more light.

Joseph and his Brethren in Egypt.



THE story of Joseph and his brethren is one of the most graphic, exquisite, and touching pictures ever embodied in any language.

There was a famine in the land. Now it is seen that Joseph, raised to power through his great skill, his good conduct, and his apparent sympathy with God, and God's apparent protection to him, by Pharaoh, king of Egypt, pursued so wise and cautious a policy, that his plans were followed by the most successful results. He saw, through prophetic inspiration, approaching famine, and he proposed, therefore, what would enable the nation to subsist in the years of famine. Other nations equally favoured did not know of the approaching famine; they accordingly misused the plenty of the seven full years, and therefore they pined and suffered under the famine of the seven poor years; and those that were able had therefore to leave their own country, and to seek food in another. However, there was no help; Jacob must starve in Canaan, or he must send to buy from Egypt. It was under the pressure of the increasing famine that he said to his sons, in language perfectly natural, "Why do ye look one upon another? Get you down into Egypt, and buy for us from thence; that we may live and not die."

The whole of the ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt. "But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren."

We see this partiality running through Jacob's character. Benjamin and Joseph were the sons of the beloved Rachel, and to these two Jacob felt special fatherly affection. Joseph being, as he believed, torn in pieces by the wild beasts, he was naturally afraid lest Benjamin, going with the very ten, who, he suspected, had at the least not taken sufficient care of Joseph, even if they had not made away with him altogether, should perish also. Therefore, he sent not Benjamin with them, "lest peradventure mischief befall him."

By and by they arrive in Egypt, anxious to buy corn among the Egyptians. Joseph, unknown to the ten visitors, was the governor over the land; "and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the earth"—not in the least suspecting it was Joseph. His dream, when a mere boy, was, that the sheaves of his brethren bowed to his sheaf; while they said, "What does this dreamer mean? Shall he predict that we, his elder brethren, though of a different mother, shall indeed bow down to him, and give him honour, as if he were something great? If they had been told that the plan they pursued to avert this greatness of Joseph was the very plan which, in the providence of God, would be employed to bring it about, they would have declaimed against the possibility of such an occurrence with undisguised and unanimous contempt. And yet the very thing they laboured to avert was what they brought about. The honour that Joseph predicted would be his own was the honour he had now actually given him; and these ten brethren, bowing down to him here, proved that Joseph's dream was not the fancy of a sick man, but the inspiration of God Himself.

"Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him." Is this probable? It must be true, because it is here

asserted ; but it is probable, if we consider the time that had elapsed. The ten brethren were still in their shepherd's dress ; for they were shepherds. Joseph was no longer the boy of seventeen years of age, with the many-pieced coat, as he was when they last saw him. He was now elevated to great rank, clothed in splendid apparel, occupying a place of power and dignity they never dreamed of or saw, being the prime minister of the most powerful prince, and in the most civilized country in the world.

Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, "Ye are spies ; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come"—that is, he spoke to them in his official capacity as the prime governor of the realm, not wishing to unveil himself, or make himself known yet. Some think there is something here like disingenuousness. Not so. There was reason for what he did ; because if he had said, "I am Joseph," what would his brethren have done ? They would have been so shocked and so ashamed of their past treatment of him, that, instead of taking corn to their father, they would have fled rather than face Israel, and carry back the tidings of their criminality, and lies, and deception ; and therefore Joseph kept them gradually approaching him, until the time came when he could disclose himself in such a manner as would be best for Jacob, best for Benjamin, and best for them all ; so that, whilst sorrow should be excited in the ten brethren by the recollection of their sin, gratitude and joy should be caused in the old patriarch's heart by the fact that Joseph no longer "was not," but was again found.

They said to him, "We are no spies ; we are come here to buy corn." How could Joseph be warranted in saying they were spies ? The valley of the Nile was the richest corn-growing district in the world, even as it might be now, if there were better men to sow and reap it. All around the Nile country there were roving bands of nomad shepherds, who fed cattle. Partly owing to the

habits of the Egyptians, a shepherd was hated by them ; but chiefly because certain shepherd-kings, prior to this period, as we have proof in Scripture, and evidence on the Egyptian monuments, governed Egypt with a rod of iron. These were the Philistines who came from Canaan. Now these very ten brethren came from Canaan, where the tyrants of the Egyptians had retired after they were driven out of Egypt ; they were also shepherds, who were perhaps otherwise hateful to the Egyptians. It was therefore natural for Joseph to say, " You are stragglers from these bands, come to see our weak places, and to plan what you can do to invade the land, and plunder our granaries." They replied, " We are true men, thy servants are no spies."

Then they said, audibly—and how must Joseph have been touched as he listened—" Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man, in the land of Canaan ; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father"—these were good news to Joseph, who did not know perhaps till now that Benjamin was alive—" AND ONE IS NOT." They gave no account of where this one was, no statement of his death ; they dare not mention it. They merely said, " One is not." Joseph, no doubt, unable to suppress the deep and overwhelming emotions of his heart, was able, in spite of his feelings, to reiterate his own statement, the very reiteration showing that he said it in order to suppress and conceal his deep yearnings to embrace them, and to say, " I forgive you."

But he adds, " I will put an end to the whole controversy ; ye shall not go, except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother. And he put them all together into ward three days." But he recollected that, during these days of confinement, their poor father Jacob might starve ; he therefore altered his plan, and said, " I will not keep you all ; I will detain one as a pledge, and the rest shall go and take corn to your father, and bring your brother Benjamin back to me."



1825

Joseph makes himself known to his Brethren.

It was for them to risk the life of Benjamin, or to starve; in either case, it was calamity. But if Joseph had revealed himself, he would never have seen Benjamin nor them again; for, no doubt they would rather have done anything than expose their own past criminality to their father.

They had not the remotest idea that this was Joseph, nor the dimmest recollection of him, and therefore he could have said nothing that could have made them suspect—"They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother." How should this deed, done twenty-three years ago, come into their minds? Conscience outlives memory and events. Calamity was heaped on calamity, trouble upon trouble; they could not get corn without grieving their father and risking Benjamin, and they asked themselves, "What is the cause of this calamity on calamity, and trial on trial, of all God's billows rolling over us?" Their conscience solved the perplexity; it had unextinguished recollections; it reminded them that they had sold Joseph as a slave, and that he had no doubt perished; that some of themselves were ready to kill him, and that it was only by the intervention of a more humane brother that he escaped a cruel death, in order to be sold as a miserable and wretched Egyptian slave. All this flashed on the minds, and disclosed their deep, dark guilt, and illuminated their past with lurid light. They said, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." What a witness is the conscience of man to the nature of sin and the righteousness of the retributions of God! How true, "The sinner's sin," except it be forgiven, is sure to "find him out." These ten had not yet repented—they were not yet forgiven.

"They knew not that Joseph understood them." They said it aloud: how must he have been affected when he heard it? "He spake unto them by an interpreter." He spoke to them in the

Egyptian tongue, and not in his own language, lest he should discover himself; and he spoke through the medium of an interpreter, who translated the Egyptian of the prime minister into the Hebrew of the applicants for corn.

All this time Joseph's feelings were too deep and earnest to be easily kept down. It is said, in exquisitely beautiful language, "He turned himself about from them, and wept." He could not repress his feelings, and he dare not yet disclose them. His heart was breaking. Sympathy and sorrow, not revenge, were there. He hid the tears which he could not repress; and when he had wiped those tears away, he "returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes."

He then gave them corn, and put their money into their sacks. All these things were designed by Joseph so to perplex, as to bring to their minds the recollection of their sins, not that they might despair, but that they might feel them, acknowledge them, and be forgiven.

When they discovered the money stored in one of the sacks, as they came to an inn, they were still more struck with a sense of retribution following them, saying, "What is this that God hath done unto us?" They now expected to be accused of theft. Their sin, twenty-three years old, haunted them at every step.

The word "inn" did not then mean what it does in modern times. It was simply a shed by the river-side, where the cattle fed, and under which the traveller or the pilgrim was enabled to eat what he had with him, and rest protected in the heat of the day.

On their return they told their father all that had happened, repeated what they and the lord of the country had said, and the stipulation which he had made, in order to their getting any more corn during the famine for the land of Canaan. "And it came to pass, as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack."

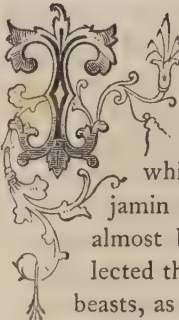
When Jacob, their father, heard this story, and the condition of getting corn, he said, what was so natural and so touching, "Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not"—a most delicate and beautiful way of alluding to what he supposed to be his cruel death, when they brought his robe, covered with blood, and said the wild beasts had killed him; but lest his feelings should be harrowed beyond bearing, it is always, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not," for the latter remains as a hostage—"and now ye will take away the only memorial of my beautiful and beloved Rachel—ye will take Benjamin away. My heart," as if he had said, "is ready to break; all these things are against me."

Then Reuben, evidently intending to comfort his father, very wrongly and rashly said, "Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee." How absurd, supposing he had failed to bring back Benjamin, to have his own sons slain by their grandfather! It was a sort of consolation that Jacob must have flung from him as no consolation at all; for he said again, "If mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

He who wrote this story, as developed by Moses, either was a genius without any comparison or companion in the history of mankind, or he wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, and wrote actual fact, while inspired to do so. Our own hearts tell us this is no fiction.



The Interview.



HE sons of Jacob having come back, and stated the express stipulation laid down by the lord of Egypt, unknown to them as Joseph, that they should bring their brother Benjamin with them, while he would keep Simeon as a hostage until Benjamin arrived, the venerable and aged patriarch's heart almost broke; it was more than he could bear. He recollected that Rachel's first son, Joseph, had been torn by wild beasts, as he supposed, through the neglect of his brethren; and he now feared that Benjamin, the only surviving son of Rachel, as he believed, would meet with the same fate; and he therefore, excusably enough, hesitated and delayed, and put off the dread and painful sacrifice to the very last moment. But "the famine was sore in the land;" and what will not a man give for his life? Death stared them in the face. It was, risk the life of Benjamin, the most beloved, or incur the certain starvation of himself, his children, and his children's children. This was no light alternative.

"It came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them" at last, "Go again, buy us a little food;" but not a word about the stipulation which Joseph had made. He was anxious to avoid the terrible necessity, and he wished to see if his sons would go and risk an

application for the food which they could not do without, leaving Benjamin behind. But Judah, who seems thoroughly to have comprehended the character of Joseph, though he did not know that he was Joseph, made substantially the remark, "It is of no use bidding us go, without Benjamin with us. This will only be to send us on a fool's errand; for the special stipulation of the man, the prime minister was this, He did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you." He understood that Joseph meant what he said, and he left it for his father to decide—Starve, with all your children, in Canaan, or send Benjamin; for, unless with him, we cannot see Joseph; and then he said, "If thou wilt not send him, we will not go down"—it would be of no use.

"And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me?" He did not know well what to say. His grief was inexpressible, and he did not know where to lay the blame; but he felt that blame ought to be laid somewhere. "Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell whether ye had yet a brother?" Judah then repeated the simple story, than which nothing can be more beautiful or more truthful. "The man put the question, Have you another brother? And, besides, how could we tell, when we told him the plain truth, that his very next request would be, Send for your Brother Benjamin; for without him ye shall not see my face again? How could we expect or anticipate such a demand, when he simply asked the question, Have you another brother? and when we answered, We have one?" And Judah said, "Send the lad with me;" make no farther delay; "and we will arise and go; that we may live and not die." And then he said, "I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever." It seemed that Judah thoroughly appreciated Joseph's character. He saw an honesty, a justice, a tenderness, a compassion about this strange

prime-minister of Pharaoh that made him feel that Benjamin would not suffer injury at his hands, and this induced him to offer himself as absolute surety for the safety and the return of the beloved Benjamin to his aged father. All the while, it is worth noticing, Benjamin was passive and silent. And then Judah said, with much good sense, "Except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time." Had it not been for this delay, which does not mend the matter in the very least, we might have returned from Egypt with our sacks filled, and you would have had plenty of bread, and to spare, instead of pining through hunger to-day.

Well, their father Israel at last consented. "If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds." His consent is extremely characteristic. One would have thought he would have said, "Since I must do it, I must." But when the sound reasoning and the good sense of Judah showed him that the thing was duty, the aged patriarch, as soon as he recognized duty, bowed, not reluctantly but cheerfully, before it; and he resolved that if the thing was worth doing at all, it ought to be done generously, nobly, well. If you see a path clearly pointed out in the providence of God, commit yourself to that path, and, like Jacob, make as pleasant as you can what you feel to be sacrifice, and act as generously as you can, where duty clearly dictates unswerving and unflinching obedience. In this spirit Jacob acted. Therefore the patriarch said, "Take with you such fruits as the land has." These still remained, and therefore he said, "Take of these as a present, and show by these to the prime-minister our good will. And in order that this mistake about the money may be rectified, take back the returned money in your sacks, and take fresh money, in order to pay for the corn that you are to bring with you. Take also," he says last, "your brother; and arise, go again unto the man." And when he gives this last sacrifice,

not an exaction now, but a free-will offering, because he thought once it might be avoided, but now he sees it is duty, he adds the prayer, "God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." That does not mean, "I am thoroughly bereaved;" but it is like when she of old approached the king, and said, "If I perish, I perish;" that is, "If it be God's will, I do submit." So Jacob says, "If it be God's will that Benjamin shall perish also, then it is God's will, and I shall submit." It is the breathing of the sublime petition, "Our Father, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

The men took presents and set out; "and when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon." What the ruler of the house can have thought when he said so, it is not easy to conceive. An Egyptian to ask Hebrews to dine with him, when such intercourse was an abomination—an Egyptian prime-minister, distinguished by his position, asking these shepherds to dine with him—what strange overturning of all the decencies of life is this!

"The men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in." Their consciences prophesied evil ever since their first sin against their aged father Jacob, and his beloved son Joseph; and everything that happened to them conscience made them conceive to be, in the purposes of God, a righteous and penal retribution. When the compass loses its proper polarity at sea, the whole course of the vessel must be altered by it; and when the conscience loses its right direction, its response to God, its deference and inclination to his law, by its constant violation of the highest duty, then the heart is filled with fears, the prospects of life are followed by uncertainty, and all the dispensations

of Providence are suspected to be judgments, instead of rich and sanctifying mercies. So they said now, "He wants to make slaves or prisoners of us, or to do us some harm." That man whose conscience is right with God, walks through society loving all, suspecting none. That man whose conscience is wrong with himself, and wrong in its relationship to God, walks through society dreading and suspecting every man. It is only the Christian who regards every man as a brother till he find him out to be a foe.

When they came into Joseph's house, they were very much afraid; and they therefore took the best course they could, by speaking to the steward of the house. How very true to nature is that simple touch, "They came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door." They wanted to get out of him some explanation of this mysterious treatment, and to ascertain whether his master was really laying a trap for them, and wishing to do them some harm. And they explained to the steward, lest it should be supposed that they had tried to conceal what had occurred, that the money was in their sacks. This was their preparatory conduct. The steward answered, no doubt, from a thorough practical and personal knowledge of his master's heart and disposition, that he was incapable of injuring them; and that this mystery to them would, when it was evolved and explained, show that "the God of their father had given them treasure in their sacks." It is plain that Joseph had retained his Christianity in Egypt, and that this steward had heard and learned of the God of Abraham from the lips and the life of his great master.

They were all introduced to Joseph; and Joseph spake to them, and said, "Is your father well, that is, the old man of whom ye spake?" Overdoing his attempt to disguise his recognition of his own relation to him, and by the very sweep and extent of the distance of his language revealing the effort to cover what was real—"Is your father well, the old man of whom

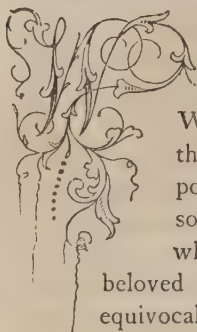
ye spake? Is he yet alive? And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive." And then they fulfilled unconsciously what Joseph predicted, and what they at once resented, "They bowed down their heads, and made obeisance."

Joseph then "lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son. And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there. And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread. And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians which did eat with him by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians. And they sat before him, the first-born according to his birthright." And he showed his great affection for Benjamin by sending him up "messes," that is, dishes from his own table, as special expressions of his attachment and love. "And they drank;" and even amid their suspicions and their fears, their misgivings and their doubts, they had an interval of happiness; and they "were merry with him."

In Scripture we find portrayed, truly and justly, humanity in all its phases—its nature, its ruin, its restorations, its weaknesses, its strength, its trials and gains, and joys and fears—as it never was or has been depicted on earth. The Bible is the portrait of man, the revelation of God, and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.



The Diving Cup and its Troubles.



HY did Joseph, unknown to his brethren, because yet unrevealed, insist on the cup, his own special cup, being put into the sack of Benjamin? What was the patriarch's main reason for dealing thus with his brethren? What object did he propose? Joseph had not seen his brethren since they sold him as a slave, and he was anxious to know whether their attachment to the last child of the beloved Rachel, Benjamin, was at all different from the equivocal attachment that they bore to Joseph, her other child, whom they sold as a slave to merchantmen going into Egypt. If, as soon as the cup was found in the sack of Benjamin, his brethren had fled, and left him to bear whatever the consequences might be, Joseph would have seen that years had failed to sanctify to them their troubles, and that they felt no sense of repentance for their great sins, and that they were still of the same selfish, envious, and domineering temper which made them once say, "This Joseph shall not reign over us," and which determined them to sell him to Egyptian task-masters out of personal spite, rather than for pecuniary profit. The steward was directed by Joseph, therefore, to put his own silver cup into the sack of Benjamin.

"As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away." That morning broke upon them in joy; they thought they had now



Jacob presented to Pharaoh.

plenty of corn, and with it no more troubles: the day, alas! closed on them in bitter disappointment, and sorrow, and in suffering. Many a bright day ends in dark clouds. When the morning comes, we, frail, ignorant, and infirm, know not what the evening shall be. The same sun that rises on bridals sets often on burials.

Joseph's steward rose up and followed the men, and overtook them, and put the startling question, "Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Wherefore have you done this? Are you aware that you have taken the cup whereby my lord divineth?" The word "divineth" has been open to different interpretations, not so much arising from the meaning of the subject itself, as on the special use indicated by so singular a use attached to the cup—"the cup wherewith my master divineth." On many of the hieroglyphic inscriptions on the Egyptian monuments, there are specimens of varieties of cups, exquisitely chased and carved; showing, in fact, whatever be our boasting and our real progress, that at that day, in artistic excellence, they seem to have attained a degree of perfection that has been scarcely reached in modern and more boastful times. These cups, it is ascertained, partly from inscriptions that have been deciphered, and partly from allusions in ancient writers, were used by Egyptian magicians, and even by Egyptian great men, in order to divine, or find out by a sort of magic (it may have been a stupid process, but they believed it to be a prophetic one) what would be the destiny of any one individual, or what would be the best way to find out anything that had been lost. It was a sort of palmistry. But it is remarkable that the Hebrew word here translated "divine," may be translated "to make trial of," or "to test." "This is the cup which my master maketh trial of," or, by a sort of figurative application, "makes use of." And therefore it may mean, not a divining cup, as used by the Egyptians in their superstition, which would have been most improper in the case of a Christian—for Christian he was—like Joseph, but a cup that he used at table, suited to the high

official rank of the personage to whom that cup belonged. Others think that the steward calls his master's cup "a divining cup" simply as that was the use of such cups.

When he overtook them, and told them what had occurred, the horrified brothers, with all the feeling of conscious innocence, exclaimed, "God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing. With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen." The instant exclamation or protest was alone almost evidence of their innocence. It is not so difficult to distinguish innocence from guilt. At all events, this exclamation was very forcible, if not conclusive, from the fact of its having been made when they were first charged with the offence. In courts of justice, the judge will ask the question, "How did the accused conduct himself when charged with the crime?" The first expression that escapes when a charge of guilt is made is, generally, strongly indicative of the innocence or criminality of the person by whom that expression is given. Now, they said with instinctive abhorrence, "God forbid that thy servants, so deeply indebted to you, should do such a thing as this!"

The steward answered, "Now also let it be according to your words"—I accept them—"he with whom it is found shall be my servant." That sounds a very slight punishment; but it is, rightly translated, "a slave"—an abject bond-slave, over whose life and property I shall have complete jurisdiction—"and ye shall be blameless." This the steward carried out, in order to bring in Benjamin apparently guilty, so that, by the detection of his seeming guilt he might discover, for Joseph's information, what were his brethren's feelings towards the only surviving son of Joseph's mother, Rachel.

Every man at once took down and opened his sack, perfectly conscious that there was no truth in the charge; and the steward

searched, and began at the eldest, that there might be no suspicion of his knowing where the cup was, and left off at the youngest; and to the horror of the brethren and the confusion of Benjamin, the missing cup was found in that sack where they least wished it to be found; for rather would they that it had been found in any one of their sacks than in his, whose detection and punishment would bring down their father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

On this, "they rent their clothes"—that is the eastern form of expressing sorrow—"and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city," to give to Joseph such explanations as they could. Joseph said unto them, "What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?" or, as it is in our marginal Bible, "that I can make trial of, or test character."

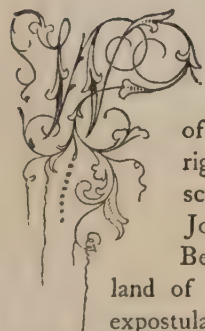
Let us recollect Judah's part in this. Judah pledged himself to his aged father, that if Benjamin did not return, he was ready to suffer all the consequences that might follow; and this therefore implied, that he would do everything that man could do to protect Benjamin, and bring him back in safety. Now he exclaimed in language so natural, "What shall we say unto my lord?" We are struck dumb; how shall we clear ourselves? The thing is so extraordinary, that I do not know how it is possible to clear ourselves of what conscience prompts me to believe Benjamin is not guilty of, and what must have taken place owing to some providential overruling or inscrutable accident, which I can neither divine, explain, nor unravel. But the real lesson of all this is, that "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants." Not the iniquity of stealing the cup, for that he did not believe, but their past iniquity; for as often as they met with perplexing circumstances, apparently destined to end in suffering, they always remembered their treatment of Joseph. That sin, like a dark shadow, then fell on their consciences. In all their merriest moods they could hear the sad and melancholy undertones of their transgression against Joseph. Whenever a

providential cloud darkened their sky with its shadow, they recollected what Judah said before, how they heard Joseph's cries and listened not to them, but sold him as a bond-slave into Egypt.

When they came to Joseph, Judah pleaded most earnestly with him for Benjamin, and so touchingly pictured the grief of Jacob, that Joseph could no longer refrain from making himself known unto his brethren.



Joseph's Disclosure of Himself.



E come to another scarcely less beautiful and touching episode in this interesting history which crowns the whole story. It is Joseph's disclosure of himself—the unknown governor at Pharaoh's right hand revealing himself unexpectedly, though scarcely for the moment believed, to be the actual Joseph, the eldest son of Rachel, the brother of Benjamin, whom his brethren sold as a slave into the land of Egypt. The touching address in which Judah expostulated with Joseph in so eloquent and affecting terms, had made a very deep, even an irresistible impression upon the heart of Joseph. It was well fitted to do so. Such was the effect of this appeal, that he "could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he said, Cause every man to go out from me;" that is, every one of the land of Egypt. "And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known," unexpectedly, and amid deep and tender emotions, to his amazed and wondering brethren; the scene was too solemn for strangers to be allowed to witness.

"He wept aloud;" and the Egyptians even could not understand how tears should ever channel the cheek of a man who had all the wealth, honour, and resources of Egypt at his disposal; they knew not the story.

"And Joseph said unto his brethren," when he was left alone, "I am Joseph." What a startling preface! Lest, however, the communication should be too overwhelming, he diluted it by referring them to another thought, "Doth my father yet live?" And his brethren, struck dumb, as well they might, partly by the recollection of their guilt, partly by the suddenness of the revelation, it being scarcely credible and yet evident, "could not answer him, for they were troubled," or overwhelmed, "at his presence."

He then said, "Come near to me"—do not stand at a distance. "Be not angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither;" for there was a purpose in it higher than yours. I do not extenuate your sin; but there was a higher arrangement contemplated in all that has happened; it was God who sent me hither, in spite of your evil purposes, to preserve the very life of those who wanted to kill me, and all of whom consented to sell me for a slave. "For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years," as he had told Pharaoh before, "in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth." Why that posterity in the earth? Because the forefathers of the great Messiah were here; and had their lives not been preserved, and their children, and their children's children, humanly speaking, his genealogy had been altered. All things were contributing to one great end by coercion or by free purpose. "It was not you that sent me hither, but God;" that is, you were not the ultimate cause, though you were, under God, the permitted instruments; you sinfully promoted what you did not intend; "and He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." But seeing that they were overwhelmed by the recollections of the past, and the disclosure of the present, he tries to divert their feelings and their thoughts, and says, "Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; do not

tarry." Hasten back to him, and think of his safety, and let him partake of the joy of the good news that your brother and his son Joseph, who he thought was torn by wild beasts, is now alive ; "and you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt that you have seen."

The fame of this extraordinary interview passed through all Pharaoh's house ; his attendants stated to Pharaoh these news so strange and unexpected that "Joseph's brethren had come." Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say unto thy brethren, This do ye ; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan." And he gave them waggons, and raiment, and food, and asses laden with provision, and everything they needed or could wish for. Joseph might have done all this by his own authority ; but there was exhibited a trait of beautiful courtesy in Joseph's master, in that he thus interposed.

Thus, one faithful son was the reason of the prosperity and the preservation of all his brethren, in spite of their many unfaithful designs.

Joseph at the same time gave them this seasonable advice, "See that ye fall not out by the way." Joseph anticipated that the first thing that they would do after conversing upon the extraordinary revelation would be to upbraid one another. Therefore, he said, very appositely, "See that ye fall not out by the way." There is no time for quarrelling ; there is only time for action. So, when Christians and missionaries convey the glad tidings of the gospel to those that yearn to know them, the same advice is needed still. There is no time for quarrelling : they must not expend their energies in internal fever, but in external carefulness and usefulness.

When they arrived, they told Jacob all the words of Joseph. He was at first doubtful, but at length was satisfied, and said, "I will go and see him before I die."

The thoughts of that little band it is not easy to imagine : self-

upbraidings, shame, sorrow, repentance, yet not unmixed with joy and gladness, alternately coursed their hearts. It was a sad yet joyous story to the aged Jacob; sons so guilty, and a son so generous—events so wondrous, and providential leadings so gracious.

“God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

“Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.”



Jacob's Visit to Joseph.



AFTER the news so unexpected to Jacob, that Joseph was alive, Israel exclaimed, in the joy and excitement of his heart, "It is enough ; I will go and see Joseph before I die." The patriarch, in fulfilment of his purpose, "took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba ;" and the very first thing that he did—partly as the expression of a glad heart, partly as the expression of a thankful heart, and partly as his daily offering of adoration and praise and worship, never withheld to the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—was to offer "sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac." In ancient days, on the institution of Levi, the sacrifices were figures, types, or foreshadows of the one Sacrifice that was to be ; and the Israelite looked through the shadow, in order to form some apprehension of the glorious substance. Now that the substance has come, the shadows have departed ; just as the shadows disappear when the sun mounts his meridian throne, or as blossom withers when fruit is ripe ; and we now look back upon a sacrifice finished and complete, as Jacob looked forward to a sacrifice no less finished and complete that was to be. His faith was prospective, resting on an atonement which was to be, which his sacrifices helped him to discern from afar and comprehend. Our faith is retro-

spective, and rests on a sacrifice that has been, and on which we lean or trust, it having been clearly brought to light in the gospel of Christ Jesus.

"God spake unto Israel, and said, Jacob, Jacob." He did not call him Israel, which was his covenant name, but finding him a wanderer in the desert, He called him by his former name, more significant of need, "Jacob, Jacob." And he instantly replied, "Here am I." Then God manifested Himself, and said, "I am God;" literally, "I am El," the Almighty God. No danger need affright you; no foe need alarm you. Omnipotence is in my arm; love is in my heart. What shall separate you from my love, which is in Jesus Christ the Lord? "Fear not to go down into Egypt." Do not be alarmed to go into a land of darkness; for the promise is, "I am with you, and I will there make of thee a great nation."

The aged patriarch had heard of Egypt only as a land of idolatry, and he naturally shrank in horror from going where that Name which was so dear to him might be profaned, and that worship which he loved would seem impossible. He needed, therefore, God to make this special manifestation to him, "So far from fearing that you will fall there, remember that you are the seed that I am sowing over all the land of Egypt to form a mighty host, which shall march forth amid miracles, victories, and mercies, until they or theirs are settled in the land of Canaan, the type of that rest that remaineth for the people of God."

How interesting is the fact we find so often in the Bible, that God's people never are placed in special trials without God manifesting to them a special grace. It is a fulfilment of the old promise, which is ever new, for it is never old or obsolete, "I will be with you; I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee," or, as these words ought literally to be translated, "I will not ever leave thee: no, never will I forsake thee." It is the strongest and the most condensed expression that can be employed,



The finding of Moses.





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JOSEPH MEETING HIS FATHER.

and denotes the fulness and faithfulness of the promise of God to be with his people always. In all time of their tribulation, in all time of their wealth, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, He who addressed Jacob in this chapter addresses them, and says, "Fear not; I am with you. When thou goest into the valley of the shadow of death, my rod and my staff shall comfort thee. I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee."

God says, "I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes." What a beautiful expression or image! "Do not be afraid that you shall die in a strange land, where a stranger's hand shall compose you to your last sleep; but be sure that that very Joseph, on whom your heart has so long and so warmly rested, will yet close your eyelids, and see to your burial, when you shall be borne to the rest that remaineth for the people of God."

When Jacob met the beloved Joseph, who he thought was torn by the wild beasts, he gave emphatic expression to the depth and the fervour of his feelings—"Now let me die." I have now nothing more worth seeing. The last, deepest yearning of my heart is gratified. I have no wish to taste any more of this world's pleasures. Or, as Simeon of old said afterwards, after a yet sublimer sight, "Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Joseph then gave special directions to his father and brethren, as to the way in which they should comport themselves before Pharaoh.

Joseph, though the chief minister of Pharaoh, yet felt that his was only a subject's place, if that was a first place; and therefore, when his father and his brethren, and their flocks and their herds, came out of Canaan, and appeared in the land of Egypt, he felt it a duty he owed to his sovereign to tell him they were in the land. Joseph therefore brought in Jacob, his father, and set him before

Pharaoh, Jacob blessed Pharaoh; that is, he prayed that every blessing might rest upon him as a sovereign, and that he might receive, above all, the highest blessing—that of knowledge of eternal life.

How wonderfully, step by step, is the hand of God seen directing the way of his ancient people—pardoning their sins, yet chastening them with great though paternal severity, lest they should think that He connives at sin, or that, because He overrules it for good, He ever ceases to hate it—watching over the seeds of the future Israel with unsleeping eye and unfaltering care. “Truly God is good to Israel,” is an acknowledgment every reader of these interesting memoirs must frequently make.

The same providential superintendence of God’s people is still carried on. He still makes goodness and mercy to follow them. But in the inspired record we see, not only the outward leadings, but the inward impulses. A portion of the curtain is lifted up, and we are able to see the council-chamber of God, and to follow his purposes as they pass from the heavenly presence into human action. These biographies are visible proofs of God in the affairs of men. We have the truth enunciated again and again in the sacred Scriptures, but in these memoirs we have it practically, personally, and nationally set forth. God is by the domestic hearth, by the solemn altar, near the highest throne. All space is holy ground, and all life religious service. “Thou God seest me,” may be uttered by man always and everywhere.



The Dying Patriarch.



T appears that the tidings reached the patriarch Joseph by popular report or rumour, that his aged and venerable father was about to go the way of all the earth. The moment Joseph heard that one he so loved and revered was about to leave him for the rest that remaineth for the people of God, he rushed to a sick father's bedside, and brought his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, with him, in order that they might see that noblest of spectacles, how a Christian can die, and be refreshed by the scene of the departure of so great worth, and go forth, strengthened as well as blessed, to go and do likewise.

The venerable patriarch, as if his great heart were overwhelmed by a sense of God's past goodness, in restoring to him his long-lost son, who he thought was dead, brings before Joseph, in the rush of grateful recollection, all the good that God had done him; and even before he spoke to Joseph one word, he breaks forth in adoring praise.

"And Joseph brought his sons near unto Jacob; and he kissed them, and embraced them. And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face; and, lo! God hath showed me also thy seed." I thought thou wast dead, torn by wild beasts; and God has not only enabled me to see thee, but thy children. And it must have been a most delightful thought to the patriarch's heart, that

those children were walking in the fear of the Lord, adorning the doctrine they professed, so that he could depart in peace, rejoicing in the Lord, his rock, and the rock and refuge of his children, and his children's children. Joseph then took them both, and placed them before him.

Joseph, who acted from nature, wanted the elder to be blessed first; but the patriarch, who acted from prophetic inspiration, blessed the younger first. This has been frequently the case. Nature makes the elder in this world the chief; but grace often passes by the elder, and lays hold upon the younger. But yet elder and younger may have that grace which patriarchs cannot bestow, which princes cannot take away—faith in a Saviour, reliance on his atonement and sacrifice, belief in his name, loving Him, and bowing to Him; that is the blessing that maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow.

Then he said, "Behold, I die!" And he did not regret life, or refuse to die. In old age, death is scarcely dying. It is the evening twilight mixing with the morning twilight, with scarcely a night between. It is the soul leaping from the decaying house, and instantly feeling itself present with the Lord. And, therefore, just as the trees in autumn become most magnificent under their autumn tints, when they are about to drop all their foliage on the earth, so a dying Christian feels the greatest joy, and is radiant with the brightest hopes, and gives, like Simeon, expression to the richest songs, when he is about to leave the house that perishes for a house not made with hands, eternal in the skies.

"I die; but though I am torn from you, God shall be with you." Blessed compensation! When God takes away the earthly father—magnificent exchange—He gives us the heavenly one. If the aged Israel is taken to his rest, oh, how gloriously is the gap filled up when the God of Israel becomes the God of his sons, and his sons' sons! And so a day comes when he and they shall meet

and mingle where there are no more tears, nor sorrow, nor separation, nor crying.

In these narratives there is a pilgrim-like air. We feel its influence as we read. May we never forget, wherever we dwell, or whatever rank we hold, that we are pilgrims, and strangers, and sojourners, looking for a better country and eternal mansions !



The Burial of Israel and Death of Joseph.

OW, when Jacob was dead, it is said, "Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him and kissed him." This was proof of filial love. Nothing is said of the conduct of the rest. They stood by. Joseph, the most dutiful son, felt most poignantly the loss of the best of fathers. Sin corrupts the heart and hardens the feelings. The holiest will always be the most sensitive. They who are truest in their relation to the Father of all, will feel the deepest and purest affection to the earthly parent, and in all other earthly relationships. Joseph commanded the physicians, according to the custom of that country, to embalm Jacob. At the same time, he asked, like a loyal subject, though occupying a subject's first place, permission of his royal master to go with his father to the tomb of Machpelah; and, according to the oath he had taken, as well as the promise he had made, to bury him in the land that was the type of the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

We find here the first instance of a national funeral, on a scale of unprecedented pomp, pageantry, and splendour, worthy of the occasion, and dutiful as became Egypt, and acceptable, we read, to the Christian man Joseph, and the rest of his household, as a mark of respect to the remains of Joseph's dead and venerated parent.

After the funeral was ended, and all the mourning that was great in the land of Egypt had passed away, the other sons of the dead patriarch, the brethren of the affectionate and dutiful brother, felt the shadow of their past great sin creep cold and ominous over their inmost hearts, and suggest the possibility, or even the certainty, that Joseph, their brother, now that their father was gone, would avenge the evil treatment that he had received at their hands. They judged him by themselves. They thought that, because they were so wicked, he could not be so good. They therefore came to him, and, I almost fear, told what was false. They said, "Thy father did command before he died." If he did so, it is not so recorded; but whether he did so or not, it shows that they saw where their strong position was in dealing with the beloved Joseph. You will notice all their appeal is, "Thy father"—"The servants of the God of thy father," knowing how strong was his affection to that father. They said, "Peradventure Joseph will hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him." Wherever there is sin in the conscience, there is always fear in the heart. "And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil. And now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father." And Joseph, pained at the recollection of it, and anxious, not only to forgive, but to forget, "wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants," thus fulfilling the prophecy that he gave, and that they cruelly tried to prevent, when he saw the sheaves of the brethren falling down in a vision to the sheaf of Joseph. "And Joseph said unto them, Fear not; for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore,

fear ye not." How Christian was that spirit ! How beautiful and becoming ! It is divine to forgive ; it is fiendish to avenge. And such a loss as they had sustained was a solemn summons to lay all their quarrels, and disputes, and past recollections, in the silent grave of their common father, and to go, and love, and sin no more.

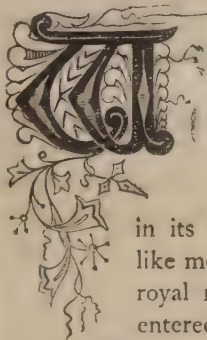
"And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's house ; and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years." Death spares neither father nor son. We read that, when his death drew near, he took an oath before he died, that his bones should be carried to Canaan—that is the pledge of the resurrection, and to be a sign to them that that land was the place of their rest and repose.

"So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old ; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."

Expunge these patriarchal memoirs from the Bible, and what a blank would be behind ! We learn from them the great truths of the existence and the providential government of God—the promises of a Saviour—retribution, mercies, forgiveness, love, man, the soul, God, sin, and holiness. As science makes progress, it casts clearer and brighter light upon the Bible. The lapse of years casts light upon it. The deepest discoveries in the earth below, and the highest disclosures in the firmament above—the telescope of the astronomer, and the hammer of the geologist—have equally combined to show that the Bible, where it touches the confines of science, does it truly ; and, more and more, that it has God for its Author, truth for its matter, and an everlasting rest for its bright and blessed hope.



LESSONS.



E close the life of a patriarch whose name is known wherever the Bible is read—not only known, but revered. No biography, except the one great biography, is more fraught with instructive lessons, more edifying to the young, or more popular in the Church of Christ, and in its nurseries, the schools of our country. Joseph, like most Christians in the world, found there was no royal road to heaven. Through much tribulation, he entered into the kingdom of heaven. The greatest spirits appear to have been taught and ripened in the same hard but salutary school. There is the same “need-be” still. Sons need chastisement as well as training.

Joseph is a memorable proof that, even in this world, the path of principle and piety is, sooner or later, found to be the happiest. No doubt, clouds often darken it, and storms beat on it, and bitter and malignant enemies beset it; but peace within mitigates all outward troubles, and the end becomes a coronation and a glory. The assurance of safety is a powerful element of peace, and more than compensatory for many of those pleasures which are otherwise wanting. Honesty is duty and principle, but it is also policy. “Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.”

Joseph's experience proves that all calumnies and false imputations do not live very long. Some incident comes up, in the providence of God, which dissolves them; or conscience in the calumniator impels him to vindicate the victim of misrepresentation. The calumnies that last longest are those subtle and malignant insinuations which minds of a low type, and hearts of a still lower temperature, utter in enigmatical hints—in subtle inuendos—the very vagueness of which constitutes their force. But these do not last for ever. The author of them lets out, in unsuspecting moments, his real character, and the subject of them, pure and undefiled, rises in greater lustre as life lasts. Joseph in the dungeon, and Joseph at Pharaoh's right hand, finely illustrates this.

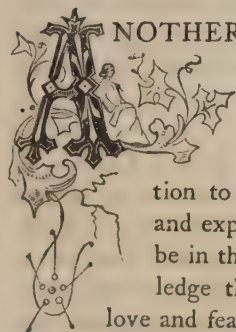
The whole life of Joseph is an impressive proof of God in the affairs of men. God in history is as real and true as God in his Church, or in his word. He is in tiny incidents and in stupendous events—in private and obscure life, and in royal and famous lives.





Moses at the Burning Bush.

A Pharaoh that knew not Joseph.



ANOTHER Pharaoh, very different in character, mounted the throne after the death of Joseph. The noble and successful policy of Joseph was forgotten, his services ceased to be appreciated, and his name was no longer a protection to his countrymen. We must learn to do good, and expect no gratitude or return. Our reward must be in the work, and our inspiration must be the knowledge that we have done what we could, because we love and fear Him in whose name we have done it. God's people in Egypt or in England must not expect everlasting sunshine. However enjoyable, it would not be expedient for them. Hence, as the children of Israel increased, "there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." "Knew not Joseph" means "approved not of Joseph," as we read in Psalm first. "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous;" that is, He approves of it. "The world knoweth us not;" that is, doth not approve. It was not "another king," but "a new king," which evidently implies that a new dynasty took possession of the throne of the Pharaohs, and exercised jurisdiction over the land of Egypt. This new dynasty, having received no present special blessing from Joseph, was ungrateful for or forgetful of the blessings that he bestowed upon a previous dynasty, and therefore persecuted the descendants of him

whom the former king of Egypt felt it alike his interest and his duty to patronize and honour.

This new dynasty was afraid of the growth of a powerful people in the midst of them. If the Jews were what they ought to have been, they could have had no evil designs against the reigning power; yet the Egyptians, evil, and ever thinking evil, said, "Come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land." Hypothetical offences have generally been the grounds of the worst persecutions of the people of God. It has rarely been for a crime proved, but generally for a crime possible, that they have suffered.

"The Egyptians made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick." It has been objected, that if any of the pyramids, as some have supposed, were the productions of the children of Israel in their bondage, as they are not built of brick, this statement cannot be correct. But the pyramid of Fayoum is built of brick; and thus, whilst all the pyramids cannot have been the work of the children of Israel, some of them may have been so. But it is singular that, on the Egyptian monuments, there have been discovered portraits with peculiar hieroglyphic characters, showing strangers or foreigners—proved to be so because they wore beards—digging clay and making bricks; and the Egyptians—evidently so because, among other features, they have no beards—standing over them with rods and whips, lashing them when disobedient; and the impression has been produced by these remains of other days, that they are cotemporaneous Egyptian records, referring historically to the very fact recorded in Exodus, that "they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field."

It is also ascertained that the bricks of which the first pyramid

at Dashoon is built are composed of fine clay, taken from the bed of the Nile, and mingled with chopped straw. The monumental proofs of the strict historical accuracy of the Pentateuch may be found in the works of Wilkinson, Hengstenberg, Rossellini, and others.



Birth of Moses.



THE Egyptian tyrant decreed that every boy born of a Hebrew mother should be put to death. By this decree he expected to exterminate gradually those he had not power to expel summarily. This was a cruel and cowardly policy. But it provoked the very issues it was intended to avert. About this time Moses was born. There was something in the countenance of this infant that gave it no ordinary beauty, as if on it there shone the very signature of God.

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child,” or, as rendered in the Acts of the Apostles, “exceeding fair;” “and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.” What this “fairness” can have been, it is impossible with accuracy to say. No doubt every mother thinks her own child the fairest; but on this child there was some divine signature—some aureole around his head—some bright evidence of a destiny before him more than human, and of a relationship that predicted something in his character and history greater than ordinary. And, therefore, on this account, as well as from maternal instinct, strong enough in ordinary circumstances, and also from a divine impulse, she took him, and resolved to hide him three months. But when the hiding of him longer than three months became impossible—perhaps from the searchers of

Pharaoh, or perhaps from the fears she entertained lest some one should inform of the circumstance—she made her election, and chose to trust her dear babe rather to the mercy of the crocodiles, the winds, and the waves, than to allow him to remain any longer within reach of the cruel tyrant who then occupied the throne. Mothers of England, how privileged are ye ! With all the inventiveness of maternal instinct and love, she collected the papyrus, which, no doubt, was the substance out of which the ark or basket was made, and of which boats are still constructed on the Nile, and fastened its different parts together with “slime,” or bitumen ; and lastly, the outside of it she covered with pitch, to protect it from the ingress of water. She then placed it, not upon the river, where it would be borne with the current to the sea, but among the bulrushes—that is, at some distance from the banks, but not far enough to come within the current, and be carried down with the stream. But not satisfied with these precautions, she resolved to set a sentinel to watch the child, probably to give the alarm should any wild beasts approach, or, still worse, should any persons, searching for male infants, threaten to come near. She therefore placed the sister of Moses afar off, to see what would be done to him. Having thus placed this sentinel, whose guardian care was increased by affection, and whose watchmanship was made more secure by the inspection of the distant eye of the mother herself, both watched, day and night, till, it is said, “the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river.” This is not the exact description of her purpose. Her object was to perform some religious rite. The river Nile was the most sacred thing in Egypt, and most of their religious rites and ceremonies were connected with the river and its sacredness. Her “maidens,” or ladies-in-waiting, “walked along by the river’s side ;” the strange object caught her attention ; and, when she saw the ark among the flags, “she sent her maid to fetch it.” We can well conceive the terror of the sentinel-sister, and,

still more, the agitation and alarm of the sentinel-mother. "And when she had opened it, she saw the child ; and, behold"—the world would say accidentally, but a Christian must say by the good providence of God—"the babe wept." This was a spectacle too touching for Pharaoh's daughter to resist ; and therefore, with true womanly feeling, in language touching and true to life, "she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children."

Making the best of the emergency, the sentinel-sister, who stood by, ran up to Pharaoh's daughter—and, not telling what was untrue, but not stating, as she was not called upon to state, what was all the fact—said, "Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?" The suggestion was so natural and reasonable, that Pharaoh's daughter said instantly, "Go. And the maid went, and called the child's mother." Here is a beautiful specimen of Christian stratagem—that is, stratagem warranted by Christian principle. It was in no respect inconsistent with the sincerity and candour of Christian character. Forthwith the mother came ; and Pharaoh's daughter said to her, little suspecting she was the mother, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me ; and I will give thee thy wages." The mother could have said, what the safety of the babe prevented her saying, "I want no wages ; my reward will be the privilege of nursing this babe ;" but with thorough tact and management, and yet with the propriety and consistency of a Christian, she took the child, and, without a word about the wages, silently and thankfully became its nurse ; "and he became," by adoption, as customary in Egypt, the son of Pharaoh's daughter. "And she called his name Moses," from the Hebrew verb *Mashah*, which means to "draw out." The Egyptian lady gave the Hebrew babe a Hebrew name.

The Acts of Moses.



AND it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren." We thus see where his heart beat. He was an inmate in a royal palace, treated as one of the king's own children; and yet his heart seems to have become more and more insensible to the splendour, dignity, and equipage of a palace, and to have sent its deepest sympathies where his poor countrymen groaned under the oppression of Pharaoh. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of

Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." He would rather be a despised Hebrew than an Egyptian prince or prime minister. Such was then the force of faith, the victory that overcometh the world.

"He spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren." That was a call for him instantly to interpose. "And he looked this way and that way"—not as if he knew that he was going to do a bad deed, but he hesitated, as if to ask, Is this the time?—"And when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand." According to Josephus, there was a law in Egypt, that if two men were seen fighting together in

mortal conflict, a spectator might interfere, even though he took away the life of one of them. Moses, therefore, did not do a thing unlawful, according to Egyptian law; but he did a thing unpardonable to Egyptian feelings, and therefore he might expect to suffer for it. At the same time, the deeds of a life so peculiar, and so beset, and in so extraordinary circumstances, are not all of them precedents for us.

Having thus saved an Israelite from the hands of a fierce Egyptian, "Behold"—what was unseemly enough in the presence of the heathen—"two men of the Hebrews strove together; and Moses said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?" See how little was his encouragement to help them who would not help themselves. This Hebrew said to him, who was ready to give up rank, patronage, and power, in order to assist his persecuted countrymen, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" This was a savage return for so much kindness. If Moses had been a worldly man, he would have said, "I see I get no thanks for doing good; I shall return to the palace, and leave the wretched Hebrews to work out their own deliverance." But when we do good, we must do it with no prospect of receiving thanks. If we do it otherwise, what better are we than the scribes and Pharisees? We are to do good because it is good, and because it is duty. If thanks come, let us rejoice that there are men who are thankful; and if not, let us be sorry only for them who cannot be grateful. Our duties remain. Our responsibilities are not diminished.

All the thanks Moses got from this Hebrew was, "Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" The truth is, the Israelites had sunk into brute insensibility under oppression. It was his misfortune as well as crime. Extreme physical degradation dulls the intellect and destroys moral sensibility. Some complain that the very poorest classes of the community, who live in underground

cellars and upper garrets, are unthankful. But, after all, it is because we are undutiful. Physical degradation has a most pernicious effect upon the moral, spiritual, and intellectual feelings of mankind. It brutalizes and barbarizes. A great physical and social amelioration in poor men's homes must be made, before a real moral and spiritual one begins in their hearts. We must raise the masses above the level of the brutes, before we can raise them to the level of Christians. We must make them men, before we can make them, by the grace of God, Christians.

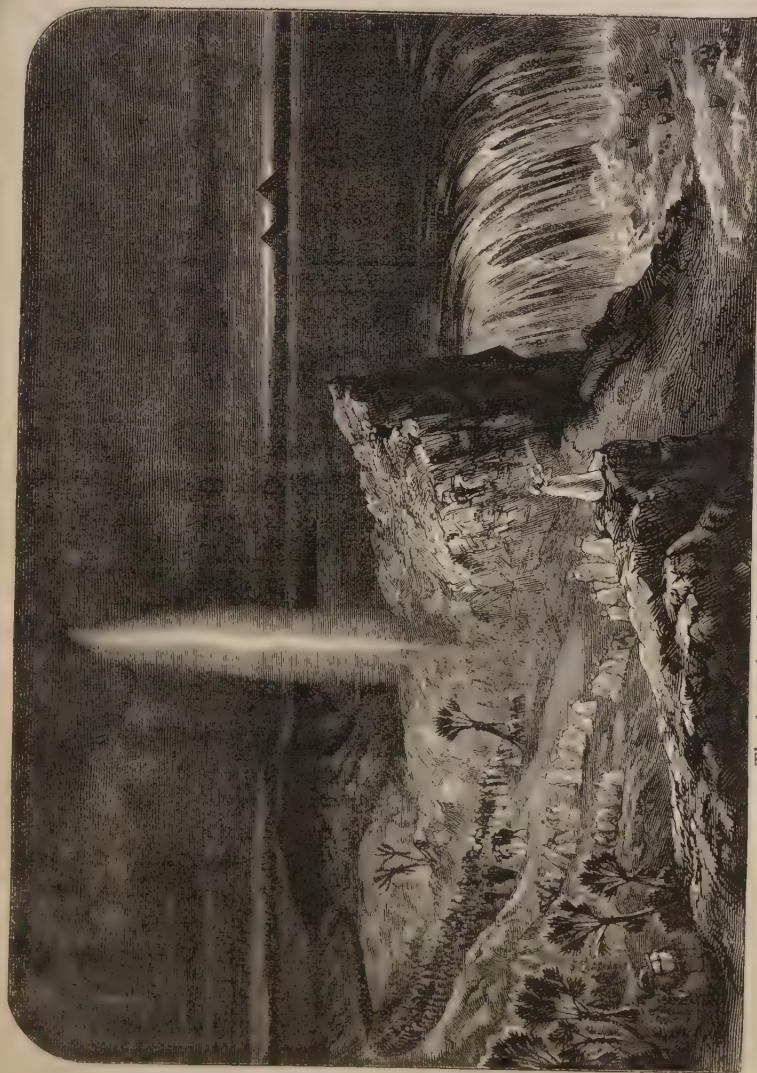
"Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian"—a country in Arabia Petræa, so called from Abraham's fourth son by Keturah—"and he sat down by a well." There the daughters of "the priest," or prince, "of Midian came down to draw water." As you read of Rachel and Rebekah, this was not inconsistent with the dignity of a princess. "And the shepherds," or some of the wild tribes of the desert, "came and drove them away; but Moses stood up, and helped them, and watered their flock." When they came to the prince, their father, they told him the story of their protection, so nobly and bravely accorded by Moses. The old man asked, "And where is he? Why is it that ye have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread"—that is, enjoy the rites of hospitality—"and that I may personally thank him for his kindness. Moses went to his home, and enjoyed his hospitality, and was so charmed with Zipporah, his daughter, that he got her in marriage. His courtship, unlike Jacob's, was brief and business-like.

Tyrants do not live for ever. "It came to pass, in process of time, that the king of Egypt died;" but the children of Israel found no relief; they still "sighed, by reason of the bondage." But "their cry came up" to the Lord of hosts.

Thus see small beginnings, right in their nature, have great ends.

That child, in that ark of papyrus, was safer than the bravest crew in the noblest battle-ship that ever sailed the ocean. The overshadowing wings of God were over him; angels ministered unto him. Pharaoh might be swept from his throne, but Moses could not perish in that ark.





The destruction of the Egyptian host in the Red Sea.

Moses at the Burning Bush.



WE have here the first and most impressive manifestation of God to Moses in the desert by way of a preface to that wonderful exodus of the children of Israel. There appeared in a bush, that burned and was not consumed, a Being who is called "the angel of the Lord." Some of the most competent critics agree that the word, "angel of the Lord," ought to be rendered, "the Angel-Lord." Hence, it has been reasonably thought this was a manifestation of our blessed Lord, in one of these forms in which He sometimes appeared before his incarnation; and, therefore, that "the angel of the Lord," wherever He appears throughout the history of the Old Testament Scripture, was none other than "God manifest in the flesh."

That the Being who appeared on this occasion was God is obvious; because, whilst it is said, "The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush," it is also said, "And when the Lord (Jehovah) saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses; and he said, Here am I. And He said, Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover, He said, I am the God of thy father the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the

God of Jacob." It is therefore obvious that the being who appeared was a Divine Being—the *Melech-Yehovah*—"the Angel-Lord;" and as the Father is never spoken of as sent, He is none other than the Angel-God, or God manifest in the flesh, our only Saviour.

Moses was commanded to take his shoes off his feet, because God was present: "shoes," properly "thy sandals." To take off the shoes is equivalent to "uncover thy head" with us. Forms change; duties abide for ever.

The bush, ever burning and never consumed, is the recognized symbol of the Church of Christ.

God said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people." How interesting the fact, that God takes cognizance of the afflictions of his people; the afflictions of one as of many—of great and small. One sometimes is puzzled to determine whether God appears greatest when He rides on the whirlwind and directs the storm, speaks in the thunder and manifests his glory in the lightning, or when He descends to give each beat of the pulse to the minutest microscopic insect, and to notice the pains, the sorrows, and the sufferings of the humblest and lowliest of the human family. God's greatness is probably more magnificently revealed by the microscope than by the telescope—in little things than in great things. He appears arrayed in a richer glory when his Fatherly hand lays its healing touch upon a broken heart, than when it launches the thunderbolt, or gives their commissions to the angels of the sky. God's people could not suffer in the brick-yards of Egypt without drawing down the sympathies, as they attracted the eye and shared in the cognizance, of the Lord God of Abraham. "I have surely seen the affliction of my people." No darkness is impenetrable to his eye—no meanness repels his sympathies. In dark underground cellars, and in royal palaces, He sees and helps with impartial and unceasing care.

God says, "I am come down to deliver them." All such

language, applied to God, is borrowed from human habits. When it is said, "God repented," it does not mean that He changed his mind, but that He changed his mode of proceeding or dealing with mankind. When it is said, "I am come down," it does not mean that God was in one place, and moved from that to another, but that He took notice of, interfered with, or interposed, and began a dispensation or a dealing peculiar to and demanded by the emergency.

God said He would bring them out of Egypt—that was the first promise—and would bring them "unto a good land, and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." It has been a favourite difficulty with persons of a sceptical turn of mind, how Palestine could be called so; but recent travels in that land have displayed enough of its remaining magnificence and wealth to show that the strongest descriptions of its fertility in ancient times are rather understated than otherwise. It has been proved to have been long a country rich in pasturage and flowers, in flocks and herds, producing large quantities of wild honey.

Gold told Moses that He would bring him to Pharaoh, and would require him to demand of Pharaoh permission for the people to go forth from the midst of Egypt. Moses naturally felt how unlikely would be his success on so perilous and so solemn an errand; for a new dynasty had now come into Egypt, a dynasty "which knew not Joseph." Moses felt that nothing would be more difficult than to persuade an Egyptian tyrant that he ought to let go profitable slaves; and he also had reason to believe that he was likely to meet with but little success even amid his own people; for he remembered that, after he had interposed to rescue an Israelite from an Egyptian, instead of receiving an expression of courteous gratitude, he was repelled and driven away by two of his own countrymen as a meddler with other people's matters. He therefore naturally asked, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" So

Paul said, in the prospect of preaching the gospel, "Who is sufficient for these things?" A truly great mind will always feel most humbled by the prospect of a solemn, arduous, and important duty.

God revealed Himself to Moses for his encouragement, and said that the name he should use, when asked who sent him, was, "I am that I am." What a magnificent portrait is here! This is God's autograph, God's definition of Himself. There is no such definition in the pages of Paganism; no such idea ever entered the human heart. It is the violation of conventional expressions; it is language sinking and breaking under the weight, pressure, and magnificence of a divine and glorious thought. John, in the Apocalypse, says, "He that was, and is, and shall be;" clothing these words in language evidently designed to embody, as far as possible, a divine and infinite thought. There is no greater proof of the essential Deity of our blessed Lord than this: when the Jews were about to stone him, He said, "Before Abraham was"—not I was, but—"I am;" that is, assuming to Himself what every Jew felt was the intransferable name, Jehovah—"I am hath sent me unto you." It is not improbable that Jesus alluded to this very definition of essential Deity.

God commands Moses to say to Pharaoh, "The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God." Some have said that that was not stating the truth—at least, the whole truth. It is quite true that God meant ultimately to emancipate them; but it is no less true that his first step was only to let them go so far into the desert. The Israelites themselves did not expect they would not return to Egypt. But God told Moses that the king of Egypt would not let them go, until, in consequence of signs and wonders, his fears should prevail over his policy, and he should be compelled to let those go whom he would otherwise retain.

The Commission of Moses.



MOSES naturally shrunk from the tremendous responsibility God was about to devolve on him; the means seemed so inadequate, and the issue so vast, that his heart fainted and failed. He naturally saw, that to march the Hebrew people from the midst of Egypt across the desert without any visible or prospective supply of food, or caravans, or accompaniment of any sort that could be a reasonable presumption to them that they should not perish from hunger by the wayside, would be almost an impossibility. Therefore, when God asked him to undertake the mission, his heart fainted, and his strength failed; and he anticipated the evil that did more or less actually occur—"They will not believe me." How will these degraded slaves, degraded by long, hard treatment, believe in the possibility of a heavenly maintenance? How will they listen to me, seeing the only experiment I made to do them good was a failure that gave no peace to them, and brought some trouble upon my own head? They will stoutly deny that which I have witnessed—the bright and glorious apocalypse of thyself in the burning bush; and they will tell me, "The Lord hath not appeared unto thee."

What step did God take not to persuade them—for that was to be a subsequent act—but to persuade Moses to undertake what He

commanded? How sad that he should need any additional sign! How sad that he, who had seen God, and heard Him speak from the bush, should yet doubt that the same God would give him strength for his journey, and success in the enterprise divinely assigned him! To make sure that any duty we engage in is clearly God's will, and instantly to engage in it in God's strength, is an instance of far higher humility than hesitation to undertake it for fear of failure. God showed him what He would do for Israel, and how much of his almighty power He would make actual before them, in order to persuade them that Moses had a divine commission, and therefore that it was their duty to obey.

God resolved to convince them by unequivocal credentials—by acts full of omnipotence. He said to Moses, "I will give you an instance of what you shall do. Cast your rod on the ground." And it became a serpent. "And Moses," being frightened, "fled from before it." How true a picture of human nature! How like to what we should have done in the same circumstances! He who inspired the Bible, and recorded this history, recorded fact. What is here written is so true to nature, that the story proves its own truth, and He only who made the human heart could have so delineated its feelings. Moses then took the serpent by the tail, and it became again a rod. This was done to encourage him.

God bade him next put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, it "was leprous as snow." It was done to persuade Moses what God would do and could do before the Israelites, in order to persuade them that Moses was sent from God, and their instant exodus their duty.

Wherein lies the force of a miracle? It does not prove a truth because it is above nature; for I cannot see any reason to doubt that Satan has done and will do supernatural deeds. The fallen spirit, who has superhuman wisdom, it is not improbable, may have superhuman power. I do not see why he who is able to reach the human

mind and tempt it to evil, may not be able to do things before the human senses more than physical human power can accomplish. But if Satan were to do some superhuman feat, whilst it would so far be miraculous in that it is above what we ordinarily see, it would not prove that Satan was God, or that a lie is truth. The miracles of the New Testament had in them, not only superhuman power, but also superhuman benevolence, and they indicated that they were from God mainly by that ; and, therefore, the miracles of the Bible, or of the New Testament at least, have internal evidence that they are the exponents or expressions of divine love as well as of divine power, and therefore from above, and not from beneath.

Moses hesitated still to go. Aaron, therefore, was appointed to accompany him, having special qualifications for a part of the mission. Moses reluctantly consented.

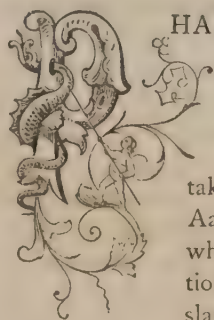
Afterwards, Moses said to Jethro, or Reuel, with that deference to the old man's wishes which is ever due to age, "Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro"—either because he had confidence in Moses, or under special inspiration—"said to Moses, Go in peace. And the Lord said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt ; for all the men are dead which sought thy life." Forty years had elapsed since he slew the Egyptian.

God gave Moses his message. "And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in thine hand : but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go. And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn : and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me : and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn." He added, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart that he shall not let the people go." If it is said in one passage that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, it is said in another passage that

Pharaoh hardened his own heart. There must, therefore, be some intermediate explanation that will reconcile both. That explanation is plainly this, that some things God does directly, and is the *cause* of; that other things God does indirectly, and is the *occasion* of. For instance, Jesus came to preach peace, and yet He Himself says, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." There can be no doubt that the direct object of the mission of Christ was not to create war, but peace. What he meant, therefore, was, that his mission to create peace would be the occasion of war. Salvation is said by the apostle to be to one "the savour of death," and to another "the savour of life;" that is, the savour of death incidentally, the savour of life directly. God hardened Pharaoh's heart by submitting to him those truths, arguments, and evidences which he ought to have accepted, the rejection and recoil of which hardened the heart they did not convince. Everybody knows, in the present day, that if one listen, Sunday after Sunday, to great truths, and, Sunday after Sunday, reject them, he grows in the capacity of repulsion and ability to reject them; and the oftener he rejects, the more hardened he becomes; and thus the preaching of the gospel, that was meant to melt, becomes the occasion of hardening the heart.



The Interview.



PHARAOH, the Egyptian king, sat upon his throne, in possession of all the pomp and magnificence of an Eastern despot, fearing no rival, and expecting no reversal. He had not the remotest idea of the great transaction that was taking place, invisible to him, between Moses, Aaron, and the Lord God of Israel, the issue of which would be his own dethronement, the destruction of his nation, and the deliverance of those very slaves whom he was grinding to the earth by oppressive tyranny and avaricious despotism. He recollected Moses, no doubt, and the very wonderful story of his early life. He had heard that he was picked up as a foundling, that he was taken home by a royal daughter of an illustrious predecessor of his own, that he was brought up in the palace, and learned there all the wisdom of the Egyptians, but that he was so foolish and headstrong a fanatic, that he had left the advantages which he had, and the splendid preferment which he enjoyed, for what Pharaoh thought a mere delusion, an idea, or sentiment—of no weight or worth when weighed against the material advantages of a great kingdom, a splendid palace, and the power he might wield as the chief servant of Pharaoh. He thought that this fanatic, though not dead, was too feeble and worthless a personage, and too much carried away

by his own romantic notions of religion, to weaken his sway over the Egyptian people.

It appears, however, that while these thoughts were passing through his mind, Moses and Aaron went into the palace, and spake to Pharaoh, and said, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." What a majestic preface to this humble, reasonable, and fair petition! "The God of Israel is our authority; we are simply his ambassadors, and we ask for Him, and in his name, that thou wouldest let the people of Israel go." Pharaoh's reply was, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice, to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." How did Moses and Aaron reply? Let us mark the contrast between the Egyptian king and the Hebrew, or Christian, messengers. Being threatened, they threatened not; reviled, they reviled not again. They took meekly his remarks; they entreated, but threatened not; for they said immediately, "The God of the Hebrews hath met with us;" speaking calmly, as if not one insulting expression had been used: "let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword." Let us do the duty that He enjoins, lest we suffer the consequences of neglecting that duty. Here is a precedent for us. If Pharaoh forgot his place, Moses and Aaron were not to forget theirs. If he laid aside the dignity of a king when he addressed them, evidently in loss of temper, as well as in irreligious language, they did not lay aside the deference that subjects owed, or the meekness that Christians felt. They spoke as if he excusably mistook their object, or was ignorant of their meaning, owing to their imperfect expression of it. They explained, that they only wanted to go, that they might escape the righteous judgment which disobedience would incur. They might have said, "If judgment begin at the house of God, what shall be the end of them that obey



Gathering the Manna.

not the gospel?" It ought to have suggested to Pharaoh—If God's own people suffer for disobedience to his laws, what will be the treatment of those who insult Him to his face, and blaspheme the holy name by which they are called?

The king of Egypt was not moved, he said, "Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works?" The word "let" is used in the old Saxon sense or meaning of the expression, and is equivalent to "prevent"—"Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, prevent the people from doing their works? Get you unto your burdens. And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens." He turned aside from Moses and Aaron with perfect contempt, and spake to the officers and exactors, and told them to see that the people instantly attended to their work. The expression, "the people of the land now are many," evidently denotes that the produce of so many labourers' work was a very great accession to the royal treasury; and that if he were to allow them to suspend their work for a very few days, it would be the loss to him of a very great income. He thought only of two things—filling the coffers of the state by grinding down the lives of his slaves, and of degrading a people who, he dreamed in his folly, if they had strength and opportunity, would rise up, resist his government, and upset his throne. He therefore said, "They are many," and insisted upon their going back to their burdens; and, like all Eastern princes, instead of being softened by this appeal to his royal clemency, he seems to have been more exasperated against them; for he now refused them straw, and yet insisted upon their producing in the same time the ordinary number, or "tale," of bricks. We can see the hardship suffered by the Israelites on this occasion; because they were required to produce the same amount of bricks in the same time, and yet they had to go and collect the straw or the stubble for these bricks, in order to satisfy the demands of the

monarch. It was therefore additional labour without the opportunity and means of accomplishing it.

But the officers, when they saw it, came and complained. Some think that, while the taskmasters were Egyptians, the subordinate officers were Hebrews. These last came and complained, "Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, thy servants are beaten, but the fault is in thine own people."

As they came forth from Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "The Lord look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh." You came professedly to do us good; you have done us harm. You have not helped one jot our deliverance, but you have added immensely to the weight and pressure of our burdens. The Lord therefore forgive you. We deeply lament it; but so it is. Often oppression becomes heaviest as deliverance draws near.

"And Moses," grieved and pained, "returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people?" He thought God had resolved to disappoint him, since their burdens, instead of being mitigated by his interposition, had been increased. Moses saw but the preface, and rashly judged of the work. He saw the beginning, and knew not the end: what God did he knew not then, but he lived to know thereafter.



Judgments and Miracles.

A large, ornate, decorative initial letter 'J' in a dark, textured font, featuring intricate scrollwork and floral patterns extending from its base and left side.

JEHOVAH tells Moses and Aaron what they should do; but He adds, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart." We observed, on a former occasion, that God is often said in Scripture to do things directly when the context shows that He did them indirectly. To be the *occasion* of a thing is very different from being the *cause* of a thing. Nothing can be more absurd than to say that God showed to Pharaoh reasons for repentance, which He prevented him by physical power from accepting. That is not and cannot be the meaning. It means simply that God was the incidental occasion of hardening a heart which would not yield to forces, motives, and reasons, adequate in themselves to melt and subdue it.

God said, "While you shall not succeed in touching Pharaoh's heart, my word shall not return unto me void; for the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord." The message was sent to the monarch; it failed in producing its legitimate influence upon him; but the residue of that influence reached the people, and many of the Egyptians knew and learned for the first time that God was Jehovah.

Pharaoh said, "Show a miracle for you." That was not at all an unreasonable request. When a new revelation is made, we require, not simply that it shall be suitable and agreeable to our

judgment, but that it shall be accompanied with such credentials as prove it to have come directly from God. A miracle has always been regarded as the evidence of a revelation from on high. It is not itself the revelation, but the evidence of it. The wax upon the deed, and the seal of one of the parties, is not the deed ; but it is the evidence that that deed is accepted and identified by the party whose seal is attached to it. The miracles in the New Testament were, if we may so speak, the pedestals of great truths. The miracles which our Lord wrought were not freaks of omnipotence, but exhibitions of power and benevolence, in order to attest that a certain doctrine or a certain message was from God. In the case of Moses and Aaron, every miracle that they wrought went, first, to prove to Pharaoh that they had a divine commission to call Israel out of Egypt ; and next, if they had not beneficence in them, they were all fitted to humble Egypt by awakening it to a sense of the idolatry in which it indulged, and to prove to that nation, by overthrowing the ground and foundation of their hopes, that they were worshipping only lying vanities. For instance, the second miracle recorded—that of turning the river into blood—was not simply an exhibition of God's power to be a credential to Moses and Aaron, but it was also a punishment inflicted upon the national idol of the Egyptians themselves. The Nile was their god. Its water is recorded to have been the sweetest that ever was tasted ; and it is said that, in modern times, the Turks are so fond of it, that they are known to eat salt beforehand, in order that they may enjoy this delicious water more. It was, no doubt, in the days of Pharaoh, equally delicious ; and it is this fact that gives such emphasis to this expression, "The Egyptians shall loathe to drink of the water of the river."

The first miracle recorded was that of turning the rod into a serpent, or rather a crocodile, and the Egyptian magicians did so likewise. The question which will occur in the course of our history of Moses' doings in Egypt is, Did the magicians really do

supernatural things? This has been a great controversy in every age. Some passages seem to show that they really did supernatural deeds, and others seem to show that they only made the attempt to do them. I do not see any difficulty in supposing that they did supernatural deeds. Grant only, that the existence of Satan is a reality, that he is a fiend armed with an archangel's force, and capable of wielding an archangel's wisdom, and it is not surely very difficult to believe that he may do upon the earth deeds that are supernatural, or more properly infranatural, as easily as what all admit, succeed in touching the human mind at every point, and persuade it to deeds and thoughts that are sinful. It is even a greater miracle that Satan should be able, in spite of my will, to touch my mind and tempt it, than that he should be able to turn a rod into a serpent, or the serpent back again into the rod. Surely the former is evidence of as great power as the latter any day.

What an awful spectacle must it have been to the Egyptians to see the illustrious Nile, whose waters were the source of the fertility of their land, and whose delicious taste was to them so refreshing, and which they worshipped and adored as a god, turned into blood, while all its fish died. If they drank, they died of poison; if they drank not, they died of thirst. The milder exhibition did not melt the heart of Pharaoh. God has recourse to a severer. Those rationalistic commentators are not to be followed who say that the river merely assumed the appearance of blood. The statement is express and distinct; and so many items are given of the resulting consequences of this change, that one cannot suppose but that it was not literally turned into blood.

How interesting is the contrast to all this presented in the gospels! The Levitical economy dawned in water turned into blood, in judgment, in punishment; the Christian economy beautifully dawned in water turned into wine, for the very first miracle that Jesus wrought was at a marriage-feast, as if He would go forth

to sympathize with nature's bright things before He went out to weep with them that wept; as if He would enter into life's sunny spots, in order to show that Christianity sweetens and sanctifies them, before He went into life's darker and sadder ones, carrying there those consolations that the world cannot give, and that the world cannot take away.

It appears that, during seven days, the river had rolled a current red with blood, and that the whole land of Egypt was in a state of dismay, terror, and alarm at the awful visitation that had fallen upon it. The reason why it lasted seven days was, no doubt, to let Pharaoh see that it was not an incidental phenomenon, but a clear and designed and direct infliction of God. If it had lasted for an hour, and disappeared in an hour, it would have been said that it was some colouring of some insect in the water, or that it was some accidental tinge from the clay or soil of the mountains, that it was some carbonate or muriate of iron, or other chemical solution accidentally mixed with the waters. But when the effects became so palpable as are here recorded, and these effects lasted so long, there could be no mistaking that this was a judgment from on high.

When Moses went to Pharaoh, and asked him to let the people go, and he refused, the next judgment was inflicted—namely, the banks of the river brought forth frogs abundantly; and so universal was this infliction, that they went into Pharaoh's house, and into his bedchamber, and upon his bed, and into the house of his servants, and upon his people, and into their ovens and kneading-troughs. One can conceive no more horrible, or more offensive, or more severe an infliction upon a great, wealthy, and powerful nation. But it strikes one as a strange thing to speak of frogs going into ovens. As our ovens are made, of course, the entrance of a frog would be impossible, from the intensity of the heat with which the oven is charged, and its height from the ground. But an Egyptian oven was a hole in the earth, in which they put wood for a fire, over

which they put an earthen pitcher, and the bread was placed inside that, and baked by the action of the fire in the hole beneath. One can conceive that, when this hole was filled with frogs, the preparation of bread would thereby become utterly impracticable.

“Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said,” evidently pained and grieved at the extent of the last affliction, “Intreat the Lord,” recognizing Jehovah, “that He may take away the frogs from me.” Such is human nature. When man is in affliction, his prayer is, “Take it away;” but he never dreams, until he is taught of God, of taking away the sin that brings on the affliction. Moses said, evidently bearing and forbearing, “When shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people?” And Pharaoh replied, “To-morrow.” We may fairly ask, why to-morrow? The answer is, that the heart of Pharaoh—which, after all, was but our common heart, intensified and magnified—was essentially unbelieving, full of blasphemy and wickedness; and he had the latent persuasion that the frogs were not really an affliction of God, that they were, after all, a natural phenomenon; and he thought he would just wait one day more, and see if the wind that brought them would carry them away; since if it so turned out he would be able more than ever to hold fast Israel, and defy the attempts of Moses and Aaron to let them go. Moses said—and here is the Christian forbearance of the minister of a people so much trodden down, afflicted, and persecuted—“Very well; be it according to thy word; that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the Lord our God.” Moses and Aaron accordingly cried or prayed unto the Lord, and He did according to the word of Moses, and the frogs were removed.

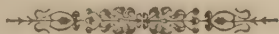
Then came the fourth judgment: “Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.” There is no doubt that the vermin meant were mosquito-gnats. Those who have been in warm climates

know what a tremendously vexatious infliction would be the whole atmosphere filled with mosquito-gnats, making life intolerable, and existence a perpetual fever. There is no doubt that this was the real infliction. The other is scarcely possible in Eastern climates; and it led the magicians to say, when they could not produce the same result, "This is the finger of God;" and yet Pharaoh's heart was still hardened, and he hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said.

There came another infliction, called in our translation, "swarms of flies;" but the words "of flies" are in italics, which denotes that those words are not in the original, but have been interpolated by the translators to make the idea more clear. All that the original says of this fifth judgment is, "I will send swarms;" again, "No swarms shall be there;" and again, "The land was corrupted by reason of the swarm." It is supposed that this was a swarm of beetles. There are in the British Museum specimens of the Scarabean beetle, which was almost worshipped as a god by the Egyptians; and it would seem that the swarms that covered the land were swarms of the very deities that they worshipped. Every plague had some allusion to the popular mythology of the Egyptians, and was meant, while demonstrating the power of the Lord God of Israel, to pour contempt upon all the gods of Pharaoh. The beetle was one of the divinities of the Egyptians—a people morally and spiritually degraded, though intellectually great; a striking proof that the intellect may be filled with light, and yet there may be no warmth in the heart, and no beauty in the life, and no purity in worship. It was an infliction upon one of the deities they worshipped, and no less so on its worshippers; and was thus meant to demonstrate the power of God, and to degrade an object of Egyptian worship.

Pharaoh called for Moses, evidently relenting a little, every blow coming heavier upon the reluctant heart of the king, and producing unexpected impressions and effects; and he said, "Go ye, sacrifice

to your God in the land." He had previously promised this, and broken his word ; but now he says he will fulfil that promise. The original request was, "Let us go three days' journey into the wilderness." Pharaoh relents so far as to withdraw his obstinate refusal of their request to offer a sacrifice, but he says, "You must not go so far into the wilderness," being afraid of their escape, "but sacrifice in this the land of Egypt." Moses said, "That we cannot do. We must either have the whole, or we can have nothing. And there is an obvious reason for it. If we were to sacrifice in this land, we should sacrifice a lamb, a heifer, or an ox. Now you know that these be your gods ; and if, as we are bound by law to do, we should sacrifice these animals to the Lord Jehovah, then we should offer up what would be a perfect abomination in your sight." Pharaoh said, "I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness ; only ye shall not go very far away"—his avarice relaxing, but still strong. He consents to let them go into the wilderness, but instead of going a three days' journey, he only wishes them to go three hours' journey ; so that, in case of their attempting to escape, he might bring them back by his armies. "And Moses said, I will intreat the Lord that the swarms of beetles may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people to-morrow ; but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more, in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord." Moses went out and intreated the Lord, and the Lord did what Pharaoh asked ; but the result was, that "Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go."



Further Judgments on Pharaoh.



MOSES again approaches Pharaoh, by the command of his God, and beseeches him to let his people go; and then he tells him, that if he refuse again, there will be sent on all the cattle of Egypt "a grievous murrain." It was, no doubt, some wasting or consumptive disease that attacked the cattle of the land, and that emphatically and distinctively indicated that the hand of God was upon them. But, at the same time, while this disease lighted upon the cattle that belonged to Pharaoh, the cattle of the Israelites were not one of them touched. This was a very palpable distinction, meant to persuade Pharaoh that these visitations were not accidents, that might be explained by the laws of natural phenomena, but that they were direct strokes of God, and that they were drawn down by the sins of the one class, as they were averted by the loyalty and fealty to God exhibited by the other.

It seems a very sad thing that the inoffensive cattle should suffer; and the sceptic will not be slow to ask, Why should God smite the cattle? But the great law that seems to run through all the dealings of God is, that man, the great lord of creation, brought ruin, not only upon himself, but upon all creatures, and still, as he sins, his subjects suffer. Wherever you see an animal die, a leaf fall, or the



Moses breaking the Tables.

lower creation suffer, there you have, as in a faithful mirror, the reflection of man's primal sin.

Notwithstanding this plague, Pharaoh's heart was still hardened, and therefore another plague was sent. Ashes were sprinkled towards heaven by the servant of God, and disease in an instant broke out upon man and beast throughout the land. The magicians were affected by this plague, and, after this, they disappeared altogether. Their services seem no longer to have been required by their infatuated ruler. They, no doubt, felt themselves thoroughly humbled by being afflicted by a disease, no longer now outside themselves, but of which they with others were the suffering and helpless victims. They disappear from the stage; and yet, notwithstanding all this, Pharaoh was not changed. It is said, "And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh." From the beginning the expression has been, "The heart of Pharaoh was hardened;" and as that is the common expression, we must explain this peculiar and rare one in the light of the common one. Clearly it means that these dealings of God with Pharaoh, instead of softening his heart, only hardened it. God is said here to do that directly which He did indirectly. It reads as if He were the cause of it, when really He was only the occasion of it. Just as the gospel is the savour of death to some—not the cause of it, but the occasion of it. And this removes all possibility of imputation upon God for these dealings with Pharaoh.

We then read of a grievous hail and rain that was brought down upon the whole land of Egypt. Egypt has very little rain; it is not true that there is none, though thunder and lightning are rarer in that land than in most countries. We can conceive, therefore, what an impression must have been produced upon the whole people of Egypt when the electric fluid, that rushed along the ground, darted from the earth to the sky, and from sky to earth, with ceaseless coruscations, accompanied with hail and rain, and the destruction of the herbs, and all the trees. It seems that this judgment, from its

overwhelming majesty, made a very great impression upon Pharaoh, for he said, "I have sinned this time : the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Intreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail ; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer." There is really much in this confession of Pharaoh that looks like genuine repentance, but it was not so. It was the product of terror, not of hatred of sin, or a sense of the love of God. This he would not do ; and therefore the servants of God were told, and they told him, that there would be brought upon him another judgment, that would finish what the hail had begun ; that every green tree, and herb, and fruit, and flower, that the hail, the lightning, and the tempest had spared, would be now consumed by devastating inroads of locusts, which would spread over the land. We read of travellers who have witnessed the inroads of immense bodies of locusts. They have noticed the very air darkened by the dense mass, or locust-cloud, and they have heard even the sound of their wings, as they approached the scene of devastation. They have seen them cover the whole earth round about for a great many yards, one, two, or even three inches thick, so that the horses could not pursue their route without treading upon them ; and they have remarked that such a plague, if universal, would be one of the greatest inflictions that could be suffered by any land. Hence the allusion in Scripture, with reference to devastating armies, and the incursions of lawless conquerors, that what was the garden of Eden before is made a wilderness and a desert behind.

This plague evidently made a very deep impression upon Pharaoh, and he was disposed to relent and give way a little ; for, whilst it is said that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, it is quite obvious that after each plague—and the word "plague," whether derived from the Greek, which is its origin, or the Latin, means a blow—he evidently relented a little, and was more anxious for terms, and, if it could only be done compatibly with his wounded pride, to come to

the close of this very serious and severe treatment. He now proposed that the grown-up men should only go away, and leave the mothers and their children behind ; because he felt that, when the old slaves were thus got rid of, it would not be a very great loss, since the young slaves would take their place, and thus his treasury would not be exhausted by their secession. He therefore tried to come to terms with Moses and Aaron, which terms, like those of an avaricious miser, were only satisfactory and profitable to himself. When he saw the frightful visitation of the locusts—all that was green devoured, all that was beautiful blasted, the whole land threatened with a plague that would depopulate it, by destroying all the grass eaten by the cattle, and every herb for the service of man—he rushed to Moses and Aaron, and said, “I have sinned”—the old story ; the mere expression of the lip, and not the feeling of the heart—“against the Lord your God ;” as if he implied, “I have nothing to do with Him, He is not my God, and I do not owe allegiance to Him ; yet I see that He is your God, and that He has great power.” “Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once.”

Then “Moses entreated the Lord. And the Lord turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red Sea. But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart”—that is, this blow, instead of subduing Pharaoh, ended in his being hardened—“so that he *would* not,” not *could* not, “let the children of Israel go.”

The Lord then told his servants to stretch out their hands, and darkness should overspread the land ; and to show Pharaoh that this was miraculous and had a moral significance, as well as a physical calamity, there was light in all the dwellings of the children of Israel. This could not be a mist, or a fog, or a very heavy and dense cloud ; it must have been some miraculous distribution of the light in one place, and an equally miraculous arrest or prevention of

it in another place, by which it was evidently intended that Pharaoh should see that moral excellence has light irradiating it with its splendour, and that wickedness has darkness as its congenial element for it to live in ; and that he might thus learn that the God of Israel was not a God displaying mere omnipotent power, but a God distinguishing now, as He will distinguish at the judgment-seat, between them who are the lights of the world, and them who are the children of night, and love the night, because their deeds are evil.

Pharaoh tried to come to terms again, and said, "Go ye, serve the Lord ; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed : let your little ones also go with you." He gives way one notch ; he comes down one peg, as it were ; for instead of saying, "Your little ones shall not go with you," he now says, "I find I cannot hold out any more ;" but still he is determined to hold all that he can, and to give up only in obedience to irresistible force what he would like to retain ; and therefore he comes to the point of saying that all, fathers, mothers, and children, shall go, "only let your flocks and your herds be stayed." But Moses acted just as the servant of God should ever act. What is right, do ; what is wrong, do not. Whenever men attempt in religion, politics, or anything else, to make a compromise between truth and error, between duty and expediency, there is sure to be a disastrous issue. Therefore the servants of God said, "No. Fathers, mothers, children, and cattle shall go out of this land, and serve God. We will have all, or none. It is not our asking, but God's command." Concede a prejudice, but never compromise a duty. Give up your own likings, profits, or preference, but never dare to surrender the sacred obligations of everlasting truth, or to compromise one jot or atom of what conscience, enlightened by the Bible, tells you to be duty to God.

But the result was, that all this hardened his heart more and more ; till we have the last solemn parting, which introduces us to that most impressive and suggestive plague that followed—the

slaughter of the firstborn of Pharaoh, and the sparing of the firstborn of Israel. "Pharaoh said unto Moses, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more"—he evidently lost his temper, and got exasperated, and uttered a speech, which was thought a great degradation by a king to his subjects in those times—"for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die." Moses, with all the grandeur of a prophet, with all the dignity that duty ever inspires, said, "Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more."

Having seen the connection, let us notice that, after all the plagues had fallen, and after each had rebounded from Pharaoh's heart, like seeds from the hard pavement, like hail upon the flinty rock, God said, "I will add one more judgment, that will have its effect, not indeed in softening his heart, but in emancipating my chosen heritage with a high hand and an outstretched arm."



The Death of the Firstborn.



THE death of all the firstborn of Egypt was the last and most terrible judgment. If the whole population had been swept away by some desolating flood, or by the earth opening to receive them, there would have been none left to mourn the catastrophe; but when the firstborn child, the hope of the house, the nearest and dearest to the heart, and in whom the whole progress and expansion of the house, whatever was its position or its rank, was centred—when that firstborn one was smitten, from the firstborn child of Pharaoh on the throne, to the firstborn child of the humblest menial in his realm, in one night, the universality of this stroke, and its occurring at midnight, when each would be awakened by the calamity that took place, and the neighbour in one house would rush out to seek sympathy from her next neighbour, and meet her next neighbour coming to seek sympathy from her—would make an impression upon the whole population of Egypt that none of the other plagues could effect.

But whilst this took place with reference to the Egyptians, God's people were protected in perfect safety

After this dread stroke, when, in the silence of midnight, unexpected by the Egyptians, the angel looked into the face of every firstborn one, from Pharaoh's down to the mother's that ground at

the mill, and it drooped, and died, "there was a great cry in Egypt." People, when they cannot explain a catastrophe, exaggerate it; and therefore they said, "We be all dead men." "This is but the beginning of an epidemic that will spread throughout Egypt. We see that the cause of it is the obstinacy of our rulers, therefore let the Israelites be driven out as speedily as possible, for we be all dead men." Pharaoh felt as they felt; for, instead of haggling with them, if I may use the expression, like a bargain-maker, as he did before, saying, "Leave your children behind you, and then your cattle," he is now only too glad to get rid of them, cattle and all, on any terms, because a judgment was on him, too terrible to be repeated, and too severe to be longer borne.

The Israelites marched out, after they kept the passover, and ate of the roasted lamb, in a way not usual with Eastern nations, namely, with their shoes or sandals on, and each with his staff, ready to take their journey into the promised land. We, too, are pilgrims and strangers looking for a better country; and if we are not to have the pilgrim-robe or the pilgrim-staff, we ought to have the pilgrim-spirit, which consists in having our heart where our treasure is, and both in heaven at the right hand of God.

"God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt." Upwards of half a million of men constituted the number of those who left Egypt. It may be said, Could not God, who could miraculously lead them out of Egypt and feed them, and make a pillar of fire guide them through the darkness of the night, have armed their hearts with courage enough, and their weapons with success enough, to destroy the Philistines? Why should He lead them by a circuitous, and not by a straight route into Canaan? If you will trace upon any of the maps in Bagster's Bible the route from Egypt into Canaan, you will find that it was purposely and

deliberately circuitous. And if you ask why, the same answer, perhaps, must be rendered that you must give when you ask, Why have I been led to my present position by a route so circuitous? God still leads the blind by a way that they know not. It is our business to look at the pillar of cloud by day, and at the pillar of fire by night. We are to run the race "set before us." The Israelites, in their exodus from Egypt, were to pursue their route through the wilderness, not inquiring, nor complaining, whether it was circuitous or straight, but looking to the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night. If we can only look at the right guide, lean upon the right arm, contemplate the right object, all the rest should never trouble us.

Pharaoh so far submitted, when the death of the firstborn struck every heart with terror and dismay, that he let the Israelites go out a few days, as he thought, into the wilderness, in order to sacrifice; in the hope, upon his part, that after they had done so they would return to the brick-kilns, and continue the productive slaves of Pharaoh and of Egypt.

The Israelites encamped upon the west side of the Red Sea, about twenty or thirty miles below what is now called Suez; and if one looks at their situation there, if acquainted with the geological and geographical structure of the country, he will see that they were literally "entangled in the land." When Pharaoh heard what he thought joyous news, that a mass of people amounting, as we have seen, to about the population of London—two millions and a half—with their baggage and their waggons, containing, as they thought, nutriment for a few days in the desert, had got into a valley, with no boats, or bridges, or other means of crossing the sea, he determined to go forth with all the might of Egypt, and to come upon them when they least expected it, and, between his soldiers and the sea, to exterminate the slaves who, under the pretext of enjoying a holiday, had bid a final farewell to Egypt.

The Israelites were overwhelmed by a sense of the difficulties that environed them, and showed the most craven and cowardly spirit, as well as hearts that had lost all confidence in the Lord God of Israel.

When they heard the roar and saw the white crests of the multitudinous waves before them, and heard the tramp of the steeds, and the rush of the chariots of Pharaoh behind them, and when they looked up at the enveloping mountains that they could not climb, they gave up all for lost. Instead of looking to the pillar of cloud that had guided them, as they ought to have done, instead of remembering that the God who saved them out of Egypt was their God still, they "cried out unto the Lord, and they said unto Moses," in language that must have been painful to him, but that did not depress so wise, so intrepid a leader, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" Suppose it had come to that, better have died free men in the desert, than have pined a few years longer as slaves in Egypt.

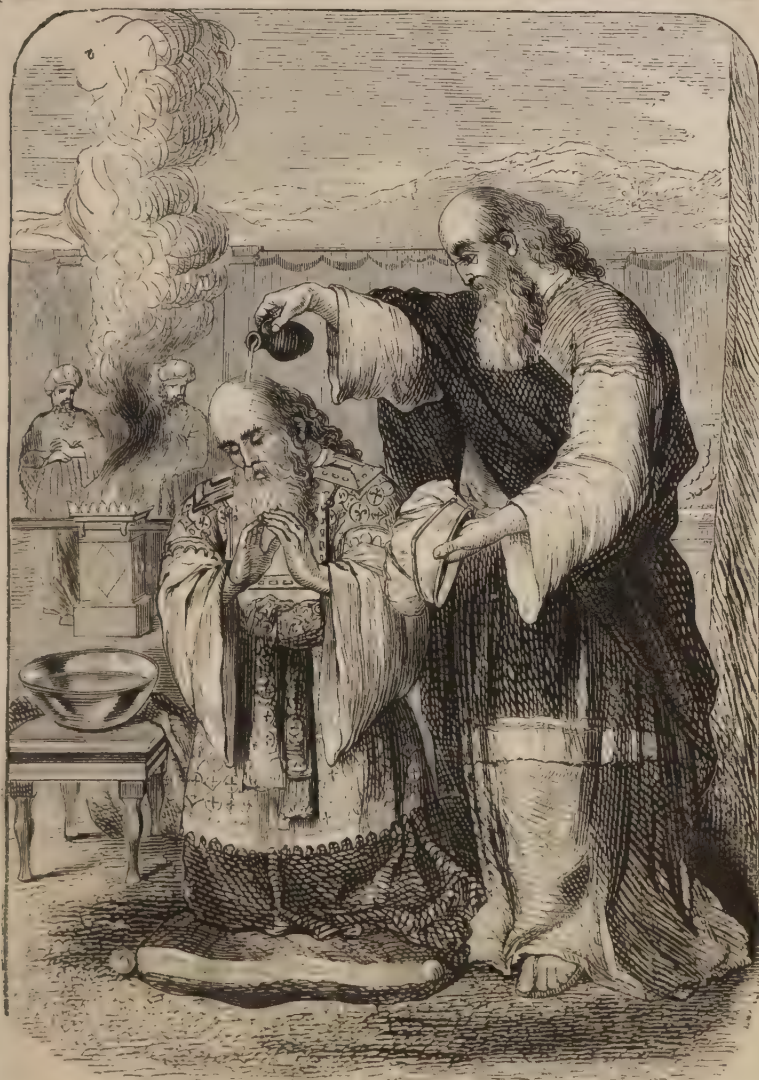
Heathen men would have felt this; and it was a deep shame and a great sin for a number of Hebrews, far more enlightened, to utter such a remonstrance to a leader who had sacrificed so much for their sakes. But mark the firmness of this great leader. When they thus cried, Moses said to them, "Fear ye not." He loses not his self-possession, he does not break forth into passionate remonstrance, but, with a calm that indicated an inspiration that was divine, he said, "Fear ye not, stand still"—do not lose your self-possession—"and see," what I know will pass before you in all its magnificence and triumph, "the salvation of the Lord."

God said unto Moses, "Wherefore criest thou unto me?" It is clear, that while Moses spoke with such calmness and self-possession to the agitated and terrified crowd, his heart was busy meanwhile in fervent and earnest prayer to God. It is not said that he prayed, but God's reply, "Wherefore criest thou to me?" is evidence that his

heart was praying whilst his lips were uttering encouragement to the people. There is a time for prayer and a time for action ; and therefore time may be spent in the one that should be spent in the other. There is a time to seek the grace and guidance that we need, but there is a time also to draw upon the capital that God has given us, and turn it to good account. Moses, therefore, instead of continuing to pray, was told to begin to act. "Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it." Moses did so. "And the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind." The wind cut the sea in twain as with a knife. The water stood as walls on either side, and the Israelites marched across dry-shod.

As soon as the Israelites marched through, the Egyptians determined to follow in pursuit. Moses, at the command of God, stretched out his rod upon the sea again, after the Egyptians had passed into the middle of it ; and the same water that divided, and stood up, and opened a promenade in its bosom for the people of God, collapsed and buried in its waste of waters the hosts of Pharaoh.

The song of victory lifted up by Moses on the other side of the sea is full of sublime thought. "Pharaoh's chariots and his hosts hath He cast into the sea : his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them : they sank into the bottom as a stone," unable to extricate themselves any more than a stone is able to lighten its weight, and rise to the surface of the water. He describes how, "with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together ;" and then the irrepressible pride of Pharaoh, "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil ; my lust shall be satisfied upon them ;" but in answer, "Thou didst blow with thy wind ; the sea covered them ; they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods ?" It was this very text that Queen Elizabeth



Moses Anointing Aaron.

had inscribed upon the coins struck in her reign, to commemorate the defeat of the Spanish Armada, and the deliverance of this great land from the instruments of torture with which the ships were laden, for purposes of wickedness and crime peculiar to Rome.

When Moses had finished his hymn, Miriam—that is the Hebrew rendering of the Greek word *Mapia*, and the English name “Mary”—“the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel,” that is, a sort of small drum, “in her hand, and all the women went out after her, with timbrels and with dances.” When the roll of the deep bass had ceased, the beautiful and more brilliant trebles began, “Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and its rider hath He thrown into the sea.”

“So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur.”



The Murmuring and the Manna.



IN the course of their desert-march, the Israelites came to Zin, where the whole congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron. They complained that they had no supply of the bread that they needed, or at least of the sort of food that was palatable to their taste; and they cried, in a most craven and criminal manner, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full." They murmured, and regretted that they had taken a single step in what they knew to be the right direction. But God, instead of judging them as He might have done, and visiting them for their transgressions, as they most richly deserved, graciously said, "Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you." He pardoned their sins. Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound. He still comes over the mountains of our transgression, and shows Himself gracious to us, in spite of our sins.

Moses and Aaron said to them, "Why should you murmur against us? We are but the instruments; we have a duty to discharge, a mission to fulfil; we have done it to the letter. We are but the instruments in God's hands; do not murmur against us as if we were the cause of this momentary inconvenience; but see if it be not the doing of that God who has done all so beneficently

in the past, and who will never do anything that will permanently injure you in the course of the future. Your murmuring is not against us, but against the Lord."

Immediately the Lord told Moses and Aaron to come near to Him and hear Him. The glory of the Lord that shone from the pillar as fire by night, and that appeared in the same pillar as a cloud by day, was the tabernacle or sanctuary, out of which God spake, and promised mercies and blessings to the children of Israel. Then it came to pass that there descended from heaven, first the dew of the morning, and after it had evaporated by the sun's heat, there lay round about them a small hoar frost upon the ground, like, as it is described in another passage, "coriander seed, white; and the taste of it," as they afterwards proved, "was like wafers made with honey."

The children of Israel said, "It is manna." This is an unfortunate translation, and does not express the meaning of the original. The Hebrew word which our translators have rendered, "It is manna," is *Man-bu*; the direct translation of which is, "What is it?" We see the error of our translation by the succeeding words; for they first say, "It is manna," and then it is added, "for they wist not what it was." How could they know it was manna, if they did not know what it was? The meaning is, that the children of Israel, surprised by so extraordinary a phenomenon, exclaimed, partly out of wonder, and partly out of a desire to be informed, "What is this?" *Man-bu*? "And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat;" and from the interrogatory, *Man-bu*?—"What is it?"—it came to be called "manna." Thus, wherever the word "manna" occurs, you have an interrogation made positive or an affirmation, and made the representative name of the substance that fed the children of Israel in the wilderness.

There was divinely laid down the way in which it was to be

gathered and used. Some of the children of Israel gathered more, and some less ; but, by a beautiful providential provision, he who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Is not this realized in the Christian who, in this world, is prospered, and yet finds he has no excess which he cannot dispose of ; while he who has the grace of God in his heart, having little in this world, finds he has just enough, and so enjoys the performance of that prayer, "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me," in the quiet and blessed contentment that finds much in little, and in much nothing over.

Notwithstanding, Moses told them they must not leave any till the morning. It seems as if this law had some connection with the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." What a beautiful and regulating principle is in that clause ! Do not give me bread for to-morrow—I may never see it ; nor for yesterday—I do not require it ; but give me to-day daily bread.



The Rock at Rephidim.



THEY had no sooner been miraculously fed, than they were thirsty and required a miraculous supply of water for drink. God again stepped in, forgiving the unbelief, and pitying the wants, however sinfully uttered, of his children. Like a beneficent Father, in spite of their sins, He opened his hand and satisfied all their desires. When there was no water to drink in the wilderness of Zin—very near, probably, to Mount Sinai, and in the valley of Rephidim, a very bleak and desert glen—the people, instead of remembering the mercies that had strewed their path in the past, and how often Omnipotence had interposed for them—at one time by means of a branch making bitter water sweet—at another time opening the great deep itself, and making it a promenade for his people, whilst it was a grave for his foes; and again, raining down manna from the very clouds of heaven, rather than that his own should want little bread—instead of hoping that this good God, whose beneficence was only equalled by his omnipotence, would again surely interpose, and give them water, they fell upon Moses, and asked him angrily to give them water to drink, as if he were God. So people go to the priest, instead of to the God of the priest; they look to the instrument, instead of raising their hearts beyond him, and exercising the privilege of asking only from the blessed Master. The Israelites said

to Moses, "Give us water, that we may drink." And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? I am not God; why should you be so unbelieving and forgetful? "Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?" But the people thirsted for water, and therefore they still murmured against Moses; and the craven and miserable slaves, bowed down by their thralldom in Egypt, and scarcely able to think a free thought, or to indulge the hopes of free men, said, "Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us, and our children, and our cattle with thirst?" Moses, instead of answering them severely, cried unto the Lord—the minister at his wits' end laying low every spirit of retaliation, and showing the meekness that became him—"What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me."

God cleft the rock, and drew forth from its fissures cool and refreshing streams. "That rock was Christ."

Modern travellers unanimously testify to the presence of a rock remaining geographically just about the place indicated in the Scriptural account, and having such unequivocal traces of a miraculous structure and character, that they are all persuaded that it is the very rock that was smitten by the rod of Moses. I quote the leading facts stated by Pocock, Shaw, and Dr. Olin of America. It is a red granite rock, fifteen feet long, ten feet wide, and twelve feet high. There are huge fissures or rents in it; and these fissures are not perpendicular, as we might expect if it had been an accidental rending, but horizontal. They are two or three inches in breadth, and a foot or eighteen inches in length, and of such a strange character, that it is impossible to explain their existence, except upon the supposition that the rock is the very one struck by the rod of Moses. The Bedouins and Arabs in the desert have a tradition respecting it confirmatory of the Scriptural account; and although I would not attach much weight to tradition, yet, when connected with the Biblical history, it may have some value. They





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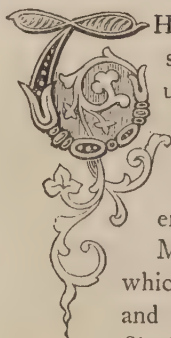
LEIGHTON, DROS.

MOSES STRIKING THE ROCK

call the rock "the stone of Moses." And the last American traveller, Dr. Olin, thus describes it: "This stone made more impression upon me than any natural object claiming to attest a miracle ever did. Had any enlightened geologist, utterly ignorant of the miracle of Moses, passed up this ravine and seen the rock as it now is, he would have declared, though the position of the stone and the present condition of the country around should have opposed any such impression, that strong and long-continued fountains of water had once poured their gurgling currents from it and over it. He could not waver in his belief for a moment, so natural and so perfect are the indications. I examined it thoroughly, and if it be a forgery, I am satisfied for my own part that a greater than Michael Angelo designed and executed it. I cannot differ from Shaw's opinion, that neither art nor chance could, by any means, be concerned in the contrivance of these holes, which formed so many fountains. The more I gazed upon the irregular, mouth-like chasms in the rock, the more I felt my scepticism shaken, and at last I could not help asking myself whether it was not a very natural solution of the matter, that this was indeed the rock which Moses struck, that from it the waters gushed forth, and poured their streams down Wady Leja to Wady-esh-Sheikh, along it to Rephidim, where Israel was encamped, perishing with thirst."



The Giving of the Law on Sinai.



THE scene represented in this chapter, so full of solemn and awful grandeur, was designed to impress upon the whole people of Israel, and through them upon us, the holiness, majesty, and greatness of that law which was not made, but expressed and worded by God, upon Mount Sinai. It is an error to suppose that the law is to be dated from Mount Sinai. This law of the ten commandments, which was delivered from the mount, ever was, now is, and ever will be; and all that was done upon Mount Sinai was, to give expression to everlasting truth, to make audible God's innermost mind, and to show by distinct and unequivocal expressions what man's duty was, and what the extent of God's requirement is, and to enable the creature, at the same time, to feel that no man can climb to heaven by that Mount; that the gap between a fallen creature and the exaction of a holy God is so great, that, in the language of the apostle, "by deeds of law no flesh can be justified." This contrast is very beautifully brought out by the apostle in a passage perfectly parallel, and while it is parallel, a most illustrative comment on it, in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, at the eighteenth verse, where he contrasts what the Jews were with what Christians are—the slavery, the fear, the terror of the ancient economy, with the freedom, privileges, and

blessings of the new. "For ye"—that is, ye Christians—"are not come unto the mount that might be touched"—that is, to a material mount; ye are come unto one that is higher and spiritual, and seen by faith—"and that burned with fire"—the indication of terror and judgment—"nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken unto them any more; for they could not endure that which was commanded. And if so much as a beast touched the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses"—the meek Moses, the temporary and typical Mediator between God and them—"said, I exceedingly fear and quake." That was the state of the ancient economy; a trembling people about Mount Sinai shrouded in darkness, lighted at intervals only by a lurid flame, the air ever ringing with the sound of a trumpet, and the reverberations of thunder—all the grandeur and magnificence of heaven without its mercy and love, resting, like a black cloud charged with judgments, over the head of a people whose consciences within condemned them, as well as the scenes without, and who felt they never could obey so perfect, holy, and pure a law. But what is our privilege? The whole scene is changed; the curtain is lifted; we have passed by Christ, the Mediator, the living way, into a very different state of things. We have left the region of storm and thunder, and the sound of a trumpet, for the region of peace.

Stephens, an American traveller, in his "Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petrea, and the Holy Land," thus graphically describes his approach to the region in question:—"Our road now lay between wild and rugged mountains, and the valley itself was stony, broken, and gullied by the washing of the winter torrents; and a few straggling thorn-bushes were all that grew in that region of desolation. I had remarked for some time, and every moment

impressed it more and more forcibly upon my mind, that everything around me seemed old and in decay: the valley was barren and devastated by torrents; the rocks were rent; the mountains cracked, broken, and crumbling into thousands of pieces; and we encamped at night between rocks which seem to have been torn asunder by some violent convulsion, where the stones had washed down into the valley, and the drifted sand almost choked the passage. At every step the scene became more solemn and impressive. The mountains became more and more striking, venerable, and interesting. Not a shrub or blade of grass grew on their naked sides, deformed with gaps and fissures; and they looked as if by a slight jar or shake they would crumble into millions of pieces. It is impossible to describe correctly the singularly interesting appearance of these mountains. Age, hoary and venerable, is the predominant character. They looked as if their great Creator had made them higher than they are, and their summit, worn and weakened by the action of the elements for thousands of years, had cracked and fallen. The last was by far the most interesting day of my journey to Mount Sinai. We were moving along *a broad valley*, bounded by ranges of lofty and crumbling mountains, forming an immense rocky rampart on each side of us. The whole day we were moving between parallel ranges of mountains, receding in some places, and then again contracting, and about mid-day entered a narrow and rugged defile, bounded on each side with precipitous granite rocks more than a thousand feet high. We entered at the very bottom of this defile, moving for a time along the dry bed of a torrent now obstructed with sand and stones, the rocks on every side shivered and torn, and the whole scene wild to sublimity. Our camels stumbled among the rocky fragments to such a degree, that we dismounted, and passed through the wild defile on foot."

The following extract from Professor Robinson's account of his visit to the spot in 1838 will go to lessen, very considerably, the



The Return of the Spies,

objection founded upon the limited space for encampment :—" We approached the central granite mountains of Sinai, not by the more usual and easy route of Wady Shekh, which winds around and enters from the east ; but following a succession of Wadys, we crossed Wady Shekh, and entered the higher granite formation by a shorter route, directly from the N.N.W., through a steep, rocky, and difficult pass, between rugged and blackened cliffs 800 to 1000 feet high. Approaching in this direction, we were surprised and delighted to find ourselves, after two hours, crossing the whole length of a fine plain, from the southern end of which that part of Sinai *now* called Horeb rises perpendicularly, in dark and frowning majesty. This plain is over two miles in length, and nearly two-thirds of a mile broad, sprinkled with tufts of herbs and shrubs, like the Wadys of the desert. It is wholly enclosed by dark granite mountains—stern, naked, splintered peaks and ridges, from 1000 to 1500 feet high. On the east of Horeb, a deep and very narrow valley runs in like a cleft, as if in continuation of the S.E. corner of the plain."

Moses appended to the Decalogue a series of social regulations, as remarkable for their humane sympathies as for moral beauty and wisdom. Nothing short of the inspiring Spirit could have taught them. Alone, they prove that Moses spake as he was moved by the Spirit of God.



Moses on the Mount.



ERE is a people brought forth from Egypt, their prison-house, amid special mercies, before whom God's omnipotence had moved to open a pathway through the deep, to rain down bread from heaven to satisfy their wants, to guide and to comfort them in their way; and yet, thus crowned with loving-kindnesses and with tender mercies, they seized the very first opportunity of the absence of their leader to make a calf or a golden image, to represent the living and the true God, notwithstanding that they had heard it proclaimed amid the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image," and in which, as in all the other commandments of the Decalogue, they had expressed their belief, and to which they had declared their steadfast determination to adhere.

Their ingratitude to God was accompanied by signal ingratitude to Moses, his chosen minister, their kind, forbearing, and magnanimous leader. He had been forty days in the mount, and these forty days were spent, not in his own work, but in contact with Deity, and specially for their benefit. The words that these insolent and ungrateful tribes used were: "Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses"—the language of contempt—"the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not

what is become of him :” he may be dead ; if so, we do not much care ; but as we have lost him, we must have some representation of Deity, in order to go before us. Great benefactors of mankind must not look for their recompense on earth. It is our privilege to do the duty that devolves upon us in providence, and to look for recognition beyond the grave ; for even the world’s greatest benefactors have not received the homage that they deserved. We must not calculate on it ; and therefore we must be guided by a sincere and deep sense of duty, not by any prospect of reward in this world. Never was there a leader so kind, so patient, so forbearing, and yet these are the words he hears from this ungrateful people, “ This Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.”

Aaron complied with their wish. It has been supposed that Aaron here tried a plan that is, in fact, old and not new, which man constantly has recourse to, yet with constant refutation of its value—the plan of expediency. Aaron, when he heard them demand some image of the Invisible, in order to put them to the test, or to put them off, or in order to make an appeal to their avarice a reason for getting rid of the sin into which they were prepared to plunge, said to them, “ Very well, then, take off all your golden earrings, and all your valuable jewels—all that is precious about your persons—take them off ; and if you are prepared to do that, then we will make an idol from them.” It has been supposed that he did not think they would do so—that he thought he could keep them from committing a great sin by proposing a way of accomplishing it that they would not submit to. But the result shows that it is most dangerous to tamper with what is clear duty. If the thing was right, he ought to have sanctioned it ; but if the thing was wrong, he ought to have said that it was so. All ingenious expedients for trying to keep men in the way of duty which are not straightforward may seem very plausible, but they are never very prosperous.

He received the earrings from them after they had taken them off, which shows that their idolatry overcame their covetousness, and they were melted into one piece, which was cut or chased into the form of a calf. Why this strange image, a calf? In Egypt the sacred bull, or the *Apis*, was the great object of the adoration or worship of the Egyptians, as we see upon many monuments of that country; and it is thought that the Israelites carried with them a faint recollection of the idol—the sacred bull—which the Egyptians worshipped, and that they made the nearest approximation to it.

Thus early evil associations engender sad memories, and mingle with holier feelings. But it is right to observe that they did not profess to make a god to be a substitute for Jehovah, but to make a god that should be the representative of Jehovah; for the language which they used was, "These be thy gods, O Israel!" The word *gods* conveys to the common reader a wrong impression. The Hebrew word for *God*, used almost always in the original, is *Elohim*, which is in the plural number. For instance, in Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth; it is in the Hebrew, *Bara Elohim*, literally, "Gods created;" only the verb *bara* is the third person singular, and *Elohim* is the plural, being a nominative plural with the third person singular. And that strange, or as one would call it, ungrammatical conjunction, involves and teaches a great truth—plurality in the Godhead, and yet unity. In that they said, "These be thy gods, O Israel," they meant, "*This is thy god*, O Israel." What confirms this interpretation is the fact that Aaron himself "made proclamation, and said, To-morrow is a feast to the Lord"—to Jehovah; that is, the true God of Israel; and therefore they meant it to be, not a substitute for God, but evidently a visible representation of God. Was this idolatry? There is no doubt of it. In the Epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle writes there, "Neither be ye idolaters, as some of them." And in the judgment here pronounced, we see that it was regarded

as idolatry by God Himself, and punished accordingly. This proves the fallacy of what some have stated—that it is quite right to have images of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, and even of God the Father. If we say, “Why do you worship images?” they answer, “We do not worship idols. These are not substituted for Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; they are merely representations of them.” But the idolatry consists, not only in substituting an image for the true God, but in representing the true God by images, which He Himself has directly forbidden. And therefore to have images of God at all is most unscriptural; to worship them, or, rather, to take the gentlest form of it, to worship God through them, is idolatry, disguise it as men like.

“They rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” This shows that, whilst they made this an image of God, the accompaniments of their worship were most objectionable. Here was just the worship of the heathen. They used to dance before their gods, to drink to excess, to indulge in all sorts of sensualism, and the Israelites did the same. The Hebrew word for “rose up to play” means properly, “rude and wanton play;” and the Greek word *μεθυσαι*, “to be drunk,” is connected with a pagan sacred origin; it comes from the words, *μετα το θυειν*, which means, “after sacrificing to the gods;” showing how completely drunkenness was associated and identified with the worship of an idolatrous people.

The Lord said to Moses when this took place, “Go, get thee down; for *thy* people.” The language here is most suggestive; God says, “They are not my people now; they have forsaken me.” He says not, “*My* people have done it,” but, “Moses, *thy* people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves; they have given up me, they have gone to their gods; they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded

them ; they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiff-necked people ; now, therefore, let me alone ;” do not pray to me—as if prayer had such influence with God, that He bids Moses not to pray to Him, lest there should be one instance in the Bible of true prayer not answered ; “let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them.” But “Moses besought the Lord his God ;” and this shows his deep sympathy with the people who had treated him with such scorn, his love for those who would not wait for his return to them—“and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people ?” Moses, with exquisite skill, changes the pronoun, and does not say, “*my* people,” but “they are *thy* people ; bad as they are, they are yet that, and therefore I beseech thee to have mercy upon them.” And then Moses pleads God’s glory. “Wherefore should the Egyptians speak ?”—as if to say, There is the result of going forth from our land ; there is all that God can do for you ; where are your promises, where are your prophecies, where are your miracles now ? “Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants ;” not, as has been said, that they intercede for us, but, remember thy promises made to Abraham, and Isaac, and Israel—“to whom thou swarest by thine own self”—remember, not their merits, but thy promises to them ; remember, not their intercessions, but thy promises respecting their seed.

“And the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto his people.” Does God, then, change his mind ? No ; that word *repent* is applied to God just as many other passions are. We say, for instance, God is angry—God is grieved ; thus applying human feelings and human passions to Deity.

When Moses came down from the mount, and saw the sin of

the people, he let fall the two tables of the testimony that were in his hand, and broke them. These tables "were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables." Some infidels have carped at this ; and I must say it does seem to me as if it were not human finger, or human *stylus*, or pen, but God Himself that engraved it. But why should it be thought impossible for God to engrave upon stone? The lightning can carry our messages ; let go at London, it can print at Dover. The very rays of light can engrave the most exquisite and intricate imagery ; and should it be thought strange, then, that God should Himself engrave upon stone the ten commandments? The fact is, the higher we rise in scientific knowledge, the more we see how true the Bible is, how worthy of God to write it, how dutiful in man to believe, and bless Him, and rejoice in Him.

When Moses heard the noise, and "saw the calf and the dancing," his feelings were so excited, that he let fall the tables of stone, and broke them. This was the result of excitement, of indignation, or rather, judging from his character, of grief. But when he came into the camp, "he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and straved it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it," as it is stated in a parallel passage, of which they were obliged to drink, as they had nothing else, in order to humble them.

Let us mark the force of one great character in a crowd. Here millions of people—a population nearly approaching in number that of London—were marching through the desert. They might have stoned Moses ; and yet, such is the influence and force of a great, a vigorous, and a powerful mind, going forth with its own great will, and expressing that will with determination, that it made them all instantly give in. They gave in, too, because there was the consciousness of guilt within them ; he prevailed because it was an

upright mind reminding them of the duties that they owed to their God, and which they had forgotten that day.

Aaron came forward, and said, "Let not the anger of my lord wax hot." Aaron seems to have been a very collected, calculating person, and yet he was a very eloquent person. Moses was not eloquent. Aaron says, "Let not the anger of my lord wax hot." But what a miserable apology does he make! "Thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief"—then why did not Aaron try to set them upon what was not mischief? "For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them"—what would you have expected to find that he said?—"Do it not, for God has said, Thou shalt not make any graven image." But he did not say this. "I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me"—unexpectedly on my part—"then I cast it into the fire;" and then he says, with apparent innocence, but with real wickedness, "and there came out this calf," as if he had never had the least hand in it; the old plagiarism from Adam and Eve—"The woman gave it me, and I did eat;" and when God came to the woman, she said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." So here, Aaron tries to vindicate his own innocence, and indirectly to cast the blame on the providential government of God, which permitted the gold to go into the furnace, and to come out unexpectedly in the shape of a calf.

"The people were naked." Not naked in the sense of being destitute of clothing, but naked in the inner and moral sense of the word, that they were before righteous, but that they now were sinful.

With respect to the command given to the sons of Levi, it was not Moses that ordered the three thousand to be slain; it was God Himself. Moses was the judge who pronounced the sentence, the sons of Levi were the executioners that carried the sentence into

effect. It was not man's hasty and passionate judgment, but a solemn sentence pronounced by God's bidding and executed by God's command.

But how is it that, amid so many that were guilty, three thousand only were slain? The answer is, there seem to have been three thousand who still remained outside the camp; for the language of Moses in the 27th verse is, "Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man." It was evidently the men that still remained outside the camp, and continued in their sin, that were slain; and those who began to see their sin in its true light were permitted to escape, but were plagued or punished with subordinate penalties and other chastisements.

Moses addressed the people, and said, "Ye have sinned a great sin"—that is, those who were still living, which shows that it was only the impenitent that were slain—"and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin." And then he says, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin"—when there is very strong feeling, very often that feeling checks itself before it is uttered; it is too deep for utterance—"Yet, now, if thou wilt forgive their sin"—he stops in the middle of the sentence; his emotions were too strong for utterance; it is an unfinished sentence; it occurs in all languages. "And if not," he adds, "blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Moses did not ask to be condemned to misery himself if God would only spare his people. The book alluded to is a book elsewhere referred to in Scripture. "Let my name," as if he had said, "be numbered no more with the living upon earth"—"Let my lot be no more with the living upon earth." See Psalm lxix. 28; Phil. iv. 3; Ezek. xiii. 9; Isa. iv. 3. And all that Moses therefore asked was, not that God would blot his name out of his own hidden book, which shall be produced at the great white throne, but that God would, if

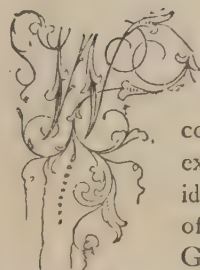
it pleased Him, take away the life of Moses, if He would only spare the people that had been guilty of so great a sin—"Let me be no more numbered with the living creation, if thou wilt only spare these;" "let my life be taken instead of the lives of the offenders that have been guilty before thee." God said, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out."





Hebron.

Lessons from Horeb.



HAT lessons seem fairly deducible and applicable to us from the great and peculiar sin perpetrated at Horeb? The children of Israel committed this great sin amid circumstances of extraordinary splendour and magnificence. Their idolatrous and evil propensities burst forth at the foot of the burning mount, whilst yet the brightness of God's glory shone upon it, and before the reverberations of his voice had been spent in their remembrance. In such circumstances, this people, notwithstanding all the blessings they had received in the past, all the manifest demonstrations of Deity that they witnessed in the present, perpetrated the great sin of idolatry in the very presence and sight of God.

The sin of the children of Israel at Horeb, the mount that burned with the splendour of Deity, may suggest to us lessons of great use.

In creation, God is brought near to us, and we are brought near to Him. Horeb was covered with God's glory; the air reverberated with his voice; and though they saw Him not, yet they saw the footprints and the signs of his presence. So we may be in circumstances where we do not see God, yet see the traces of his presence, the marks of his power; and, like the Israelites at Horeb, we may forget God. Go out on a still and beautiful night,

when no sound is heard but what seems the most solemn—the noise of the waves of time as they break upon the shores of eternity. Look up at the sky over head, where the stars look down like the very eyes of omniscience, and the wide-spread firmament is to a Christian what it should look to all—the dome and the roof of this portion of our Father's house. Or, rather, stand amid the rugged and gigantic scenes of Nature—amid Alpine or Scottish scenery, where mountain is piled upon mountain, and Alp upon Alp—amid terrible ravines, where the rocks seem to have been rent by lightning, or upheaved by shocks of ancient earthquakes—all indicating the footprints of One who seems to have trod the mountains in his wrath, and broken them in his fierce indignation; in such scenes there are the irresistible proofs of the presence of God. These scenes are to us as so many Horebs—places where God has revealed Himself. The sky and the stars tell us of God's immensity and unsearchableness. The broken rocks, the gigantic mountains, the subterranean fissures, tell us of his anger and his judgments. Amid such scenes, what have we felt? Have not our hearts often, in God's own great cathedral, strayed from God? Have we not, amid scenes that ought to have impressed us with a deep and overwhelming sense of his presence, had thoughts not in the least heavenly—thoughts and imaginations we would not disclose even to a brother, still less wish God to see? Have we not too rarely felt, "Surely God is in this place"? Has not the market, or business, or pleasure, or self intruded, amid the awful splendours and grandeur of the scene? We, too, therefore, have made a calf at Horeb—we, too, have forgotten God where He has revealed Himself to us, and turned the glory of the scene into the humiliating circumstances of human shame.

But we are, perhaps, worse than they. The Horeb that the Israelites saw had in it not one alleviating trait; it was what the apostle calls in his Epistle to the Hebrews "the voice of words"—

the presence of the consuming fire. But in those scenes in the natural world, we can see, not merely traces of wrath. True, no one can look on our globe as it is on its surface, still less with the geologist study the pages that are below, and not be convinced that it has been the scene of frightful convulsion; but yet, amid all the grand scenes that speak of God's ire, we have seen, interpenetrating them, beautiful and relieving traits of the presence and the goodness of God. If the starry sky speaks of his immensity and omniscience, those stars also guide the traveller on his way, and are precious to the voyager upon the unsounded sea. They are signs also of beneficence; as if, when the sun sets at even, ten thousand little suns rush out to supply his place, that man should not be left alone and in darkness. Look, again, at the crumbling ruins of ancient rock, where all seems to speak of wrath; and you will notice the tiny moss creeping into the crevices, and relieving their ruggedness; or the ivy climbing up the walls, as if to hide the defects that it cannot repair or restore. Thus, in the midst of traces of wrath we see relieving traits of goodness, as if Nature herself contained amid her ruins a dumb and yet expressive prophecy of a day of restoration, when all that sin has wronged shall be righted, and all that wrath has broken shall be restored, and a new and a better Genesis shall pass from sea to sea, and a more beautiful Paradise close the world than that with which it commenced. Amid such scenes and circumstances, what have been our feelings? When we have seen the proofs that God is angry—but blended with them signs of his beneficence—when the cloud has told us of judgment—and the sunshine through it has told us also of benevolence—when we have gone forth into the scenes of creation—when we have been able to retire from the bustle, the excitement, and the business, and the traffic of this world, is it not too true that we have admired, but that we have not worshipped—that we have been pleased, but not solemnized—that we have

looked at the scenes of this world as scholars and naturalists, but we have not bowed the knee and adored as Christians? We thus carry the feelings of every-day traffic into the scenes where they ought to be absent—where God so clearly, and impressively reveals the traces of his presence—where God has placed another Horeb in the nineteenth century, covered with the splendour of his presence, echoing with the words of his mouth, calling us from Nature up to Nature's God. Amid such scenes, we, as guilty as the Israelites, have had our golden calf, and forgotten God our Saviour, and turned his glory into our shame.

Let us look at another department of God's great government; that is, the dispensations of his providence. Whatever befalls us in this world, God is in it. One of the lessons we all need to be taught is, that there are no such things as accidents. "I believe in God the Father Almighty;" I do not believe in accidents. Admit that there is chance in the turning of a straw, and I must conclude that there was chance in the making of a world, and that there is no such thing as providence at all. But it is not so. What the world calls accidents are missionaries from God, whose consecration and commission we cannot at present see; but what we do not see now we shall see hereafter. In one day, all we have amassed in the lapse of years, all we have put aside for declining life, is suddenly washed away by an unforeseen and unexpected flood. We go forth from what was to us a Paradise into what is to us now a bleak world. In that calamity, God has come near to us; it is to us our Horeb; it is the presence of God, though we may know it not. Then how do we conduct ourselves? As the Israelites did? Or do we say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." Do we say, "Shall we receive good from the hand of God, and shall we not receive affliction also?" Or do we set our wits to work to repair it without thinking of God? Or do we say, "It was that unlucky interposition; it was that unhappy

scheme ; it was that false friend ; it was that traitorous companion ?” If so, what are these second causes ? Just each a golden calf ; the idol that we place in the room of the living God ; and to whom we assign the issue and the beginning, forgetting God our Saviour, and so turning our glory into shame. Or in our home we have lost “the only son of his mother,” and that mother a widow. Or we have lost some other near and dear to us. Our heart has received its first baptism of tears. We see an empty place that used to be full ; we cease to hear a footfall that fell upon our threshold like music from the skies ; a great gap is made in the affections of our heart. What are the feelings with which we receive it ? It is God who has come near to us ; that death-chamber is to us a Horeb. It may be love to us that the lost is taken ; it may be love to him that he is taken ; but plainly it must be a source of pain and sorrow and grief. God does not make a stoic ; there is no excellence or virtue in insensibility. To weep is human ; but to weep as though we wept not, is divine. But when we review the loss we have sustained, the blow that has smitten us, what are the feelings with which we regard it ? Do we attribute it to some incidental cause—to some accident. Do we say, “Oh, if I had not taken that course, then it would not have been thus.” Or do we say, “If I had only known this, it would not have happened ; it would have been altogether different ?” All such reasoning is forgetting God our Saviour, and turning our glory into shame. It was God that did it. The dark cloud concealed a smiling face ; it was love, not wrath ; it was mercy, not judgment ; it was God coming near to us, so that we could hear his very voice, and touch the very fringe of his garment, and behold the brightness of his glory as it passed by. And when it has gone, what are our feelings now ? We are cast down, dejected, depressed ; do we go to this world’s cisterns in order to quench that sadness ? Do we take a deeper plunge into this world’s

frivolities and dissipations, in order to drown and stupify that sorrow ? Or do we bring our sorrow to Him that will not remove it—for that is inexpedient for us—but sweeten it, and supply the gap that He has made in his providence by a presence He bestows in his grace. If we do so, we are not making a golden idol at Horeb in his own immediate presence ; but we recognize the God of our salvation, and say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Not second causes, not incidents, not accidents ; “these are not our gods, O Israel.” But it is Jehovah at our birth, Jehovah in our sickness, Jehovah in our death-bed—all and in all.

Or let us look, on the other hand, at some great national disaster. Let it be war that breaks out, and sweeps with its destroying wave the continent of Europe. Nations are, perhaps, involved in its terrible issues ; and we are compelled to acknowledge that God has come out to punish the inhabitants of the earth. Or some great blight takes place of the fruits of the earth. The corn wants sunshine, and perishes before it ripens, and a whole nation pines and perishes in famine. Or a conquering epidemic sweeps through the length and breadth of the land, bringing down to the grave the young and the old, the strong and the weak. Each of these are providential dealings ; they are each God coming near to us, if peradventure we may see Him. When God has spoken to us by the ordinary laws of creation, and when He finds that we have disregarded his voice, He breaks the continuity of things, steps in unexpectedly ; and whether it be a war, a famine, an epidemic, or a death, He enables us to feel, and gives us the opportunity of seeing as we never saw before, that God is near, and that this is our Horeb—the place of his manifestation. How, in such circumstances, do we feel ? Do we attribute all to human agency ? Do we say, “It was that emperor that caused the war ?” Or do we say, “It was that corrupt nation that deserved utterly to be swept away ?” Or do we say,

that the epidemic is caused by too much heat, or too much cold, or too much wet, or too little? Do we say it is some human mismanagement? All these things have their place, all of them their scientific value or importance; but we should merge the philosopher in the Christian, and look above the laws of chemistry, and find our footing only where it can be firm, amid the attributes of a present and a governing God. If we attribute all these things to secondary causes, we just do as the Israelites did at Horeb; for where God has revealed Himself with unwonted clearness, there we commit sin notwithstanding his immediate presence.

But there are other manifestations than these. Let me trace the joyous summer, the gentle spring, the prolific harvest; let me suppose a nation's coffers full, its population healthy, the cattle on a thousand hills; let me suppose peace in our borders, prosperity in our palaces, and, in the beautiful language of the Psalmist, "the valleys covered with corn; they shout for joy; they also sing;" let me suppose there is little in our land to grieve for, but very much to be truly thankful for. That is as really God coming near to us as in the epidemic, the war, or the famine. By a strange perversity of our nature we are very willing to acknowledge God when we feel a great calamity; but we do not think it is God when a blessing comes down upon us to sweeten our lot. But the sunshine is as full of Deity as is the shadow; and when autumn sits amid her sheaves, like a mother amid her children praising God, that is as truly the presence of our Father as is the winter, when he spreads his snowy mantle over hill and plain, or smites the forests with his great winds, and brings out their strange and mysterious music. God is as much in the beautiful sunshine and pleasantness of autumn as He is in the storms and the snows of winter; and we should see Him drawing near in the one as truly as He draws near to us in the other. Mercies are as much the footprints of God as judgments. When we suffer, do we pray to Him? When we are prospered, do

we praise Him? What does James say? "Is any man merry? Let him sing psalms. Is any man sad? Let him pray." Our praises and our prayers, our joys and our sorrows, equally bring us to God. In such circumstances of joy and prosperity, or in circumstances of sadness and disaster, do we see God, who has come near to us by them? Or do we say, "It was ill luck that did this; it was bad advice that did that?" We then shut our eyes to Horeb, the place where God reveals Himself. The Israelites made an idol to their own liking. We do not break off our earrings, and make from them a golden calf; but we make our fancies and our imaginations into an idol. It is not an idol from the gold mine, but an idol in the heart; and thus we turn our glory into shame, making an idol even at Horeb, and sinning in the very presence of Deity Himself.

But there is an inner world with which we are all more or less familiar—our own heart. In the convictions that sometimes come into conscience, we have evidences of God drawing near. Are there not times when the very lightnings of heaven seem to flash on the soul? We have sometimes laid down upon our beds, or retired to our rooms, and some scene of the past—a scene that we would give all the world to forget, and twenty worlds if we could only annihilate—has revealed itself within, and in the very lightning of Mount Sinai itself. We see its splendour in the light of God—we feel God breathing Himself into our hearts, and making us think of ourselves, whether we like it or not. What is this? It is God come near to us: it is God, not on Horeb, but nearer, closer still, in the recesses of our own individual consciences. How do we act under this influence? Do we try to get rid of the feeling by going into the world? Do we draw upon the excitements of this world, in order to extinguish the admonitions of the next? Do we have recourse to some amusement or excitement, in order to keep our eyes from it and the God that is in it? Or do

we, when God's law reveals the greatness of our sins, flee, where we may flee, not from God, but closer to God, to the blood of sprinkling, which cleanseth from all sin, and in which we may wash away the transgressions of a life-time, and stand before God without spot, or blemish, or wrinkle, or any such thing. In such a case, ours is not the guilt of the children of Israel; our Horeb becomes the scene of our greater sanctification, and God's drawing near to us makes us draw near to Him—children to a Father, and a Father to his children, both one in Christ Jesus.



Moses Prepares New Stones.

MOSES, in obedience to the divine command, ascended Mount Sinai, and presented himself before God. He only could do so; for he was a typical mediator, a representative of Jesus Christ, the only Mediator, who has passed into the true holy place, and appears in the presence of God for us. On that very mount, which burned with fire, was shrouded with blackness, and from which the deep thunder rolled continually into the ears of quaking Israel—on that very mount, whose antecedents had been so dark and so terrific, God revealed the most beautiful and comforting description of Himself in the whole Bible. It was designed to show that Israel was not under mere law; while they learned what the law was, they were also to enjoy a foretaste of the gospel. We associate with Sinai everything that is terrific; the contact and the presence of a Sovereign, a Legislator, a Judge. But we should not forget that on Sinai also was revealed this beautiful portrait of Deity: "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." God rarely says a word of terror that is not followed by two of comfort; He never shows a dark cloud without seams in it letting forth a portion of his love, mercy, and beneficence.



Rahab and the Spies.

On receiving this revelation of God, Moses bowed himself and worshipped, and said, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us ; for it is a stiff-necked people ; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance." What gave Moses confidence to utter such a petition ? On Sinai, while the law was given, he uttered no such prayer. He then quaked and trembled. But here he addresses God in prayer, and not only seeks pardon for the past, but prays for a favour, the richest and greatest that God could bestow—that He would make his people his very inheritance. Man's inheritance is that which he prizes ; if it be an estate, if it be wealth, it is something that he takes to himself, and that he prizes highly because it is valuable. Moses says to God, "Make this very people, this stiff-necked people—pardoning their first sin—that peculiar people, that chosen nation, that royal priesthood, that holy generation, thine own very inheritance which thou wilt prize for ever." What emboldened Moses thus to pray was the manifestation of God's character—"The Lord God merciful and gracious." As if Moses had said, "Well, if this be the God I have to deal with, I need not hesitate to ask of Him anything that I want for me or mine." The revelation of God in all his excellency is not only the ground of prayer, but the highest encouragement to pray. We pray not to God the Judge, or the Legislator. We begin our prayer as we should ever begin our creed, "Our Father which art in heaven." He has first revealed Himself our Father in Christ, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin ; and seeing the revelation of Himself that He has given us, we make that the basis of asking the largest blessings that heart can conceive, or tongue can utter.

Moses was forty days and forty nights on the mount—"he did neither eat bread nor drink water." This was not the fast they attempt at Rome, and which they do very badly, abstaining from flesh, and eating vegetables and fish ; it was an absolute fast ; it was

total abstinence from food. When our blessed Lord fasted in the desert, it was also an absolute fast. We cannot follow his example of totally abstaining from food for forty days. There are some things in Jesus that are not for us to imitate: his walking on the waves of the sea; his raising the dead; his forgiving sins. Christ is our example in all his imitable perfections; but there were traits in his character which are inimitable, and the forty days' fast was one of these. If to fast totally was the practice of Moses on Sinai, and if Jesus fasted totally during those days He was in the desert, it is quite certain that we cannot do it; if the experiment be made desperately, it must end fatally.

The immediate contact with Deity seems to have left a portion of its material splendour radiating from the countenance of Moses, admitted to close and intimate communion with God. Scripture represents the moral glory of God to have a physical and material splendour that compensates for and darkens the very light of noon-day. In the picture of the New Jerusalem, it is said, "There was no need of the sun nor of the moon"—they were not extinguished, but there was no need of them, because "the glory of God and of the Lamb was the light thereof."



The Consecration of Aaron.



the holy tabernacle, raised by a people's unsparing liberality, was Aaron solemnly consecrated the first high priest, and in this act clothed with robes of beauty and of glory in the presence of all the people.

Aaron was the first high priest in the ancient Jewish economy. That lofty office lasted, with more or less of corruption cleaving to it, till the shadow was merged in Christ, the universal High Priest, who liveth and reigneth a Priest and a King upon his throne—a High Priest in all things tempted like as we are, and yet without sin.

It is well worthy of special observation that the first high priest was consecrated and set apart to his office by Moses, a layman. He acted by God's command; everything he said was by the authority of God, and exactly what He had said to him; but still it was Moses that sprinkled the altar; it was Moses that "took the blood, and put it upon the horns of the altar, round about with his finger;" it was Moses that "took the blood, and put it upon the tip of Aaron's right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot." Thus God gave a layman authority and jurisdiction of the very highest description in the Christian temple. Whatever lesson it may teach, it is an historical fact.

When Aaron was consecrated, "the whole congregation was

gathered together unto the door of the tabernacle." This is a very beautiful trait. In the Christian Church in modern times, a minister should be ordained in the face of the whole congregation. When Aaron was consecrated, the whole congregation were assembled as witnesses, as well as to join in supplication for a blessing on his head.

The ornaments appointed for Aaron were, the mitre for his head, the golden plate, the holy crown, the breastplate, the Urim and the Thummim, the ephod and the girdle. There is no mention of sandals; and we are led from this and other passages to infer, that the ancient Jewish priests offered their sacrifices with their feet bare. We might infer this, not only from all omission of sandals or coverings for the feet in the Levitical inventory, but indirectly from traditional remains in other countries also. In the temple of Diana, in ancient Rome, the priests and priestesses had always to enter with bare feet. The Mahometan leaves his slippers behind him when he goes into the mosque; and the Abyssinian Christian, at the present day, leaves his shoes or his slippers outside when he goes into a Christian temple; and when the Brahmin enters a temple, he enters with his feet naked. Every article of the dress of Aaron was significant. A definite lesson or truth was expressed by it.

During seven days, the rites connected with the consecration of Aaron lasted uninterrupted. On the eighth day, the first day after his consecration had been completed, he was ready to enter upon the great functions of his office. The number seven is always used among the Jews, and constantly in the Old and New Testament, as the great type of that which is perfect. We read of seven days of the week, seven churches, etc.

The first sacrifice that Aaron was commanded to offer after his consecration *was* the sacrifice of a slain calf. Underlying this prescription may be an allusion to his great sin when he made the representation of a calf out of the golden trinkets of the people, and tempted the people to bow down and worship it. When he entered

on his office, his first act was therefore a reminiscence of that great sin of which Aaron, as the leader of the people, had on one occasion been guilty. The Lord also on this occasion appeared to Aaron.

Moses accompanied Aaron into the holy of holies. This was contrary to the law in most cases ; but Moses, being here the great medium of teaching to Aaron and to all the people, he was not only authorized, but it was his duty, to go into the holy place along with Aaron, and there perhaps teach him whom he had consecrated.

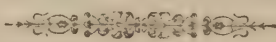
The glory of God appeared when Aaron came out and blessed the people. "And the glory of the Lord"—that is, the *shechinah*—"appeared unto all the people," and "consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering." All the sacrifices of Levi were consumed by fire which came down from heaven ; and such consuming of the victim by fire was the evidence to them that God was pleased, and that the offering was accepted. So we read in 1 Kings viii. 10, "And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud ; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house." All this was regarded as a token that the offerer and his offering were accepted and owned of God.

All here is significant, pointing to one higher and holier and greater than Aaron. We have in Aaron the gospel as the people learned it in the days of Moses. In the Epistle to the Hebrews all is explained ; and, by the brilliancy and sharpness of the contrast between the Great High Priest and the typical high priest, moral and spiritual truths are made more clear, more impressive, and instructive.

Aaron has passed upward, where he is a worshipper before the throne ; Jesus remains in heaven and in earth our Great High Priest. Aaron had to offer first for his own sins ; this is the evidence of his fallen nature. But Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, who offered once for all for us. Jesus was at once the Priest, the Sacrifice, and

the Altar. His atonement needs no repetition, and is incapable of an addition. "By one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

The very fact that the Jewish victims were ceaselessly and continuously offered proves that they could not take away sin. Hence David, when he rose to the highest pitch of evangelical experience, and writing after his great sin, says, in Psalm li., "For thou desirest nor sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering." If these had been atoning or expiatory, they would have been the very things that God would have delighted in, and would have desired, and that David really needed. But David looked beyond these, and saw Him who was the antitype, the object, and the end of these; and he therefore prayed that God would hide his face from his sins, and blot out all his iniquities. There were subordinate ends in these sacrifices; but, beyond all these, and beyond all doubt, the great end of all Leviticus—its pervading aim, its object, its meaning—was to teach Christianity, which in one word is Christ crucified. What is Christ crucified? Christianity. What is Christianity? Christ crucified. The lustre of the victims of Levi was borrowed from the cross: their significance and their interpretation are found in the cross of Christ. Christ was not adapted to them, as the popular mind often supposes, but they were pre-adapted to set forth Christ. He was the archetypal victim—they were shadows designed to signify Him. These sacrifices began in Paradise the moment that Christ was declared; and they ceased on Calvary the moment that Christ died. They were buried with Christ in his grave—only Christ rose, and all the sacrifices of Levi remain behind.



The Spies.

MOSES was instructed by God to send spies into the land of Canaan. He believed their report on their return would cheer the hearts and revive the courage of his desponding followers. Afraid lest even such rulers might be daunted or alarmed, he bade them, "Be ye of good courage"—do not be afraid—"and bring of the fruit of the land." His reason for requiring them to bring the fruit was, it happened to be the time of grapes, and thus they would be able to judge, first by their quantity, next by their flavour, of the nature of the soil, the warmth and temperature of its sunshine, and the good they might expect in going into a land which was covered with a thousand promises, and said to be pregnant with all the blessings of the heaven above and all riches of the earth beneath.

These deputies went, and cut down clusters of grapes at Eshcol, and brought back also figs and pomegranates. And "the place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence." They returned from exploring the land after forty days' toil, and came to Moses, and to those who had sent them, and gave in their report of their proceedings; and told him, "We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and we find that it is all that ancient promises described

it, all that our full hearts hoped and expected it would be ; a land that floweth with milk and honey. And as a proof that it is so, here is the fruit of it." They thus brought back substantial proofs of a soil rich and productive in every respect.

But when they reported what they saw, with a single exception, they showed very brave at the commencement of the enterprise, but their hearts and courage failed them before it was fully executed. Their fears magnified their peril. He that fears a thing always fancies that thing to be greater, stronger, and more formidable than it is. An army afraid of the opposing army is likely, through the dim haze of its fears, to see it more numerous and more powerful than it is. These spies, frightened and timid, said, "The land is most delightful, very fruitful, very fertile, very beautiful ; but the people, they are giants, they are the sons of Anak ; and we ourselves are but grasshoppers before them." There was not a word of truth in this ; for the Canaanites were more wicked than most men, but in their stature there is no proof that they were generally higher than other men. But the fears of the cowardly spies magnified the stature of the sons of Anak, and they became afraid, and brought back a report very depressing to the people, who showed thereby how lasting the effects of early impressions are. We must bear in mind, the Israelites were long the slaves of Pharaoh amid the brick-kilns of Egypt ; and got over very slowly the sense and influence of that first slavery. We blame nations very often for their conduct, but we forget that it is early bad treatment that has made their later conduct so defective. We should pity those whose misfortune it has been to have had early years of sorrow, of sadness, and depression, rather than blame and find fault. These children of the desert never lost the influence of the iron that had entered into their very souls. They were frightened at the sea, frightened at the pursuing Egyptians ; they wished they were back among the flesh-pots of Egypt, and that this man Moses had not brought them to the desert. And

now, upon the very verge of the land of promise, their fears overcome and paralyze them.

When the spies brought back this most depressing and discouraging report, though they carried in their hands proofs of the fertility of the land, and though they had seen so many miracles in the past, there were some not of the same way of feeling or thinking. Caleb, the translation of which name is "all heart," "stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once and possess it ; for we are well able to overcome it." Here was one who was all heart, and therefore all hope. But his heart and his hope were sustained, not by his own strength, but by trust and confidence in God ; for he said, " If the Lord delight in us"—that is his ground of trust—" then He will bring us into this land, and give it us ; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bread for us"—that is, they will easily be consumed—" their defence is departed from them"—that is, trust in God—" their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us ; fear them not." His confidence of success lay, not in the prowess of those that accompanied him, or in the skill and strength of those that conducted them, but only in the presence and the promises of God. Under a sense of the presence of Omnipotent power, and of promises that power alone can carry into practice, all difficulties are dissolved, all clouds are scattered or turned into sunshine, and the greatest obstructions are removed. Be sure you are in the path of duty, led by principle, looking up for strength, looking forward for success, and success is absolutely certain. God's strength is made perfect in our weakness ; what He has promised He is as willing as He is able to perform.

Caleb's advice was extremely encouraging. " Let us go up and possess the land ; let us go up at once and possess the land." " At once." No delay. Why so immediate ? Because, when difficulties are to be overcome, the longer we look at the difficulties, the

larger they grow. When objects are feared, the more we ponder, the more our fears will increase. But when we go forward at once in the right strength, seeking the right aid, inspired by the right motive, our fears will be dissipated, and our terror will subside; God's strength is made perfect in our weakness, and we shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Want of immediate success must not discourage us. Caleb, when he stirred them up with his brave and courageous accents, did not meet with success. The cowardly and distrustful Israelites were so depressed, that instead of catching his spirit, and accepting his proposal, they repeated their objections even in stronger language. If we be engaged in a good work, let us not be discouraged because we do not meet with instant success. If we are distributing good tracts amid a people that for years seem to be no better, be patient. The course is right; let us persist in it, and stand by it. If we are enlightening the ignorant, trying to teach the obstinate, and have met with no success, let us still persist in it. Our duty is plain. We are not answerable for effects, but only for doing in God's strength what we can to make men wiser, better, holier, and happier.

We need not send, even if we could, spies into the heavenly Canaan to bring us tidings of its beauty. The whole New Testament is full of authentic and conclusive proofs of its glory and beauty. It is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled—a better country—the scene of the just made perfect.





Jericho surrounded.

Death of Aaron.



HE typical high priest must pass away, that the Great High Priest may fill the whole temple with his glory. He is therefore disrobed of his sacerdotal garments on Mount Hor, and is gathered unto his people. "Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them on Eleazar, his son, and Aaron died there in the top of the Mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the Mount." He was interdicted entering into the promised land. Aaron originated the order which lasted till the High Priest that ever liveth put on his sacerdotal robes, and entered within the veil. In the Scripture records, every one gives way to Christ. Each servant comes in succession within the horizon, proclaiming and pointing to Christ, and having finished his mission, passes away, that Christ may be "all in all."

The office of the priesthood is the sovereign and inalienable prerogative of Christ. We have in the New Testament economy bishops, presbyters, ministers, ambassadors, but no sacrificing priests. The one sacrifice has rendered alike impossible and unnecessary all other expiatory sacrifices. The one High Priest has dissolved the priesthood of Aaron, and made a sacrificing priest obsolete for ever. "By one sacrifice He has perfected for ever all them that are sanctified." Many Aaronitic priests are merged in one, many

sacrifices in that on the cross, and many altars in that which is indestructible for ever. In one Name we have access to the Holy of Holies. By his blood redemption everlasting and complete is brought near to every one. Around the cross all ancient priests and victims, types and ceremonies, gathered; and when Christ cried, "It is finished," they responded, "Amen," and disappeared for ever. Through Christ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father. The Epistle to the Hebrews is the complement of Leviticus.



Death of Moses

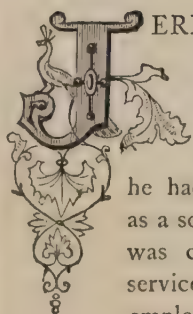


HE foundling of the Nile, the minister of God, the leader of the hosts of Israel, the richly-gifted prophet, must go the way of all the earth. He had finished his course, kept the faith, and fulfilled his mission. He saw from Nebo the whole land of Gilead and Dan, of Naphtali, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Judah—the land promised to Abraham. His age was a hundred and twenty years, and his eye was not dim, nor were his vital powers exhausted. It seems hard that he should see the prize for which he had striven and suffered for eighty years sparkling in the distant sunshine, and yet not be allowed to touch it. Yet his death made him free of a nobler land—the heir of a richer inheritance. He was denied an entrance into the type by being borne upward to the land of which it was the sign. Perhaps he was too old to enjoy the earthly Canaan. It was enough to see it, and be assured of its final possession by the children of Israel. He could thus see his work was not in vain, his mission no failure, and God's promise no delusion. He might be thankful his eyes had seen the land, though his feet had not trodden it. Simeon saw the price of the everlasting rest in the infant of Bethlehem, and departed in peace. Tabor was more than a compensatory sight to Moses. Denied an entrance into Canaan, and admitted into the glory of "the just made perfect" in heaven, he came down from the

heights of joy, in company with Elijah, and on Tabor, in the very heart of the land of promise, he testified to Jesus. Since that day, the space he occupies in history, the name he has acquired in every language, the influence his sublime writings still exercise in the world—all render that ancient prophet only second to the once rejected, now crowned Lord.

It seems at first strange that his grave should be selected in a spot unknown to his cotemporaries, and still undiscovered by the researches of modern travellers. This arrangement had a present moral importance. Had the Israelites known the place of his sepulture, they would have made it an altar, and his relics they would have invested with a religious veneration, and the teacher of a pure worship when living would have been made the object of an idolatrous worship when dead. Unknown to men, his dust is not unseen by Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. It sleeps in Him. It will hear the voice of the Son of God, and that mortal will put on immortality, and that corruptible incorruptibility, and he who lived and died “a prophet like unto Christ” shall rise like Christ, and reign with Him in glory, where the song of Moses and the Lamb, one blended strain, shall rise from many lips for ever and ever. The noblest epitaph ever written on human tombstones is that inscribed on the memory of Moses by the pen of inspiration, in that noble roll-call of the sainted dead, the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews: “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.” The splendour of the epitaph lights up the obscurity of his grave.

Rahab and the Spies.



ERICHO was a doomed city. Its destruction became a great necessity, and the means of accomplishing its ruin had therefore to be immediately employed. The primal purpose of God did not suggest to Joshua inactivity. On the contrary, he had recourse to the usual way of doing his duty as a soldier, abundantly satisfied to do his work, which was clear, and to rest the result on Him in whose service it was alike his honour and his mission to be employed. Duty is ours, everywhere and always; the issues lie in the presence of Him who reigns in heaven and rules on earth. Accordingly, two men were commissioned to go and examine the height of the walls, the depth of the fosse, how many men it was likely to hold, how many swords could be drawn in its defence, and what weak points there were from which they could assail it with the greatest chance of success; and to follow up that by any other inquiries that would facilitate the operations of the army under Joshua, their anointed commander, to whom so great a work was assigned.

These two, on their arrival, came first to the house of a harlot, of the name of Rahab. Her house was built upon the walls, perhaps upon the battlements. Seeing her at the door, they entered and made inquiry as to the state of the citadel, its fortifications, the

number of men that could defend it ; and, in fact, drew out every information it was necessary to know in relation to their enterprise. Some have concluded that this woman, into whose house they entered on this occasion, was really what she is here called. But this is very doubtful. Some think that the word translated "harlot" ought to be translated "innkeeper." Certainly, the Hebrew word so translated does also mean a lodging-house keeper or an inn keeper. But it is doubtful if this really meets the difficulty. Inns, in our sense of the word, were nearly unknown in ancient times. The modern khan occasionally existed. But by no courtesy of words could it be called a hotel or modern inn. Rahab received and hid the spies ; but information of their arrival must have reached the ears of the authorities of Jericho. They therefore came to Rahab, who seems to have been well known, and charged her with giving hospitality to the spies who had arrived from the camp of the enemy. Had she confessed that she had received and hid them, she would have lost her life. But it may justly be asked, Why did she receive and hide them at all ? She was a citizen of Jericho, owing allegiance to its ruler. The only solution of her conduct, though not the justification of what she said, was, that she had cast in her lot with the followers of the living and the true God, and Israel had become her country, Israel's God her God, Israel's people her people ; and abjuring the land she was born in, not because she was a traitress, but because it was abandoned, corrupt, and depraved, and cleaving to a holier people, and to the true and living God, she made Israel's people her people, entertained the spies, sheltered them from peril, and contributed to the downfall of that guilty capital in which she herself had so long lived.

On their asking her, she told them, "There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were." So far, her answer was true ; she could not state, probably, the very place from which they came ; but, with this allowance, it seems excessively like an

evasion. Her next statement was positively untrue ; and so far it is difficult, on the supposition that she was a believer in the true God, or, as we might say, a real Christian, to vindicate her conduct in telling what was a deliberate falsehood. She said, "It came to pass, about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out ; whither the men went I wot not ; pursue after them quickly, for ye shall overtake them." She had, in fact, brought them up to the roof of her house, and hid them under stalks of flax, which she had laid in order to dry upon the roof. There is great difficulty in vindicating her conduct in thus telling lies—or rather, real impossibility. St. Paul quotes Rahab as an instance of the power of faith ; the Apostle James also quotes her as one justified in the sight of God,

Lying was then, as it is now, a besetting Eastern sin. Rahab was a recent convert to true religion. Her heart was right, her conscience imperfectly informed, and her inveterate habits weakened in their roots, but not yet utterly extirpated. She attached herself, and her interests and hopes, to Israel, the people of the true God. Much may be said by way of palliating, but nothing in the direction of excusing, her untruthfulness. Of this we are sure, Rahab and the ripest believer on earth must equally and truly confess, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

The compact entered into between Rahab and the spies, or the Israelites, was this. She said, "I know that Jehovah hath given you the land ;" and she added, that she knew that the fear of them was everywhere, and that "the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." She thus showed she was a believer in the one living and true God. Having thus explained, she made her conditions ; she assumed, of course, her safety was secured in consequence of her services ; but, like a true Christian, she would not be satisfied with the assurance of her own safety without trying to guarantee

the safety of them that were near and dear to her. A true Christian will not be satisfied with securing his own salvation ; he will try also to show the way of salvation to all with whom he is connected. She therefore said, "Now, therefore, I pray unto you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token, or pledge, that you will do so ; namely, that you will save the life of my father, and my mother, and my brethren and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death." This was a very fair stipulation. The men answered, "Our life for yours if ye utter not this our business." And they promised, on attaining the victory, to treat her and hers with kindness and civility, in consideration of the service she thus rendered to Israel. She forthwith let them down by means of a cord or rope from the house, which was built on the walls, and they again stipulated and pledged themselves to fulfil the obligations they had undertaken, at the same time pointing out to her the steps she should take to enable them to do so : "You, Rahab, must take this scarlet cord, this rope of scarlet, by which you have let us down from the window into the trench below, and you shall hang it out at the window ; and when we lay siege to the city, and with our battering-rams and other means break down all its defences, we will spare that house out of whose window there hangs this scarlet rope by which you have let us down into the trench ; and, therefore, the signal will be this rope hung out." They argued, very properly, "If your father, and mother, and sisters, and brethren, keep within the house from whose window hangs this red rope, then they will be saved ; that you may depend upon. But if they do not keep within—if they go into other houses—then of course we can give no pledge that they will escape in the universal slaughter." A very instructive lesson is here presented to us. Though this was an historic fact, yet it does suggest the beautiful truth, that if we be found in Christ, the signal of

which is our character, we shall remain unscathed amid the judgments of that day ; “ for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” But if not found in Him, and found where we should not be, and where we are forbidden to be, then our blood will be upon our own heads ; we shall die suicides, not slain.

So the men returned, and told Joshua, their commander-in-chief, everything that had occurred, and showed, by the most cogent reasons, that Jericho was already in their grasp.

We can admire Rahab’s love to, and entire sympathy with, the people of God, and yet condemn her sin. Early habits ought to be taught our children, and, above all others, the habit of speaking truth at all hazards. Shuffling, evasion, and equivocation are various forms of a lie.



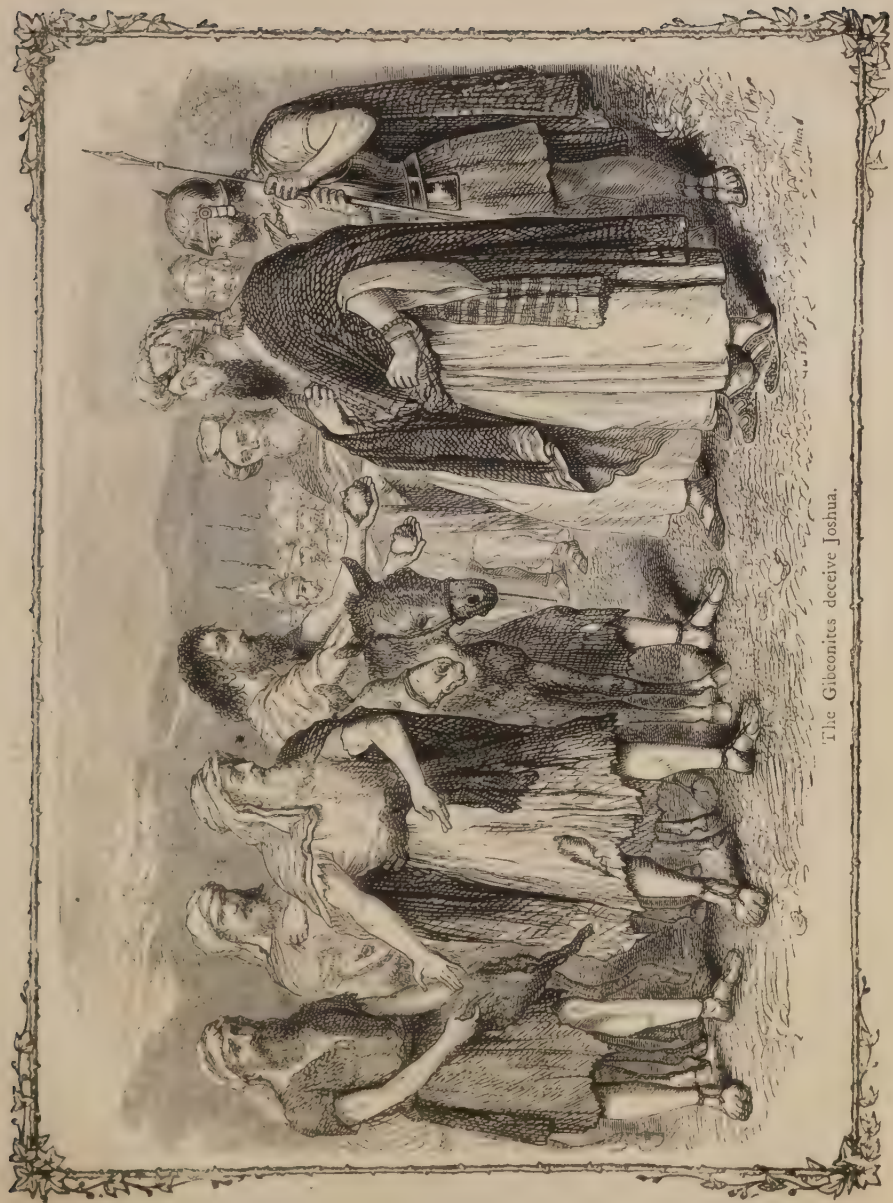
The Fall of Jericho.



OSHUA crossed the Jordan. The part where Joshua crossed the river is called Bethabara, or the house of passage. The average depth of the river at this place is still eight or nine feet. The rolling stream was cloven in twain, the water standing like a wall on either side. It may be inquired, why this great miracle, when, with a little delay, ordinary means could have bridged the Jordan? It was necessary, to give Joshua that prestige in the hearts of his followers, which would induce them to follow him

without fear in his arduous career. God gives command to Joshua in these words: "Ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days."

And these trumpets, called rams' horns—named popularly after what they resembled—but known ceremonially and ecclesiastically as the trumpets of jubilee, were instruments consecrated to announce the different feasts and festivals of the Jewish religion, and therefore had a definite, sacred, and solemn meaning. The command to Joshua was, that these trumpets should be blown, that the priests should carry the ark of the Lord, that they should compass the walls every day, and the last day seven times, and then the walls of the city should fall. Joshua did as he was commanded, and took the city, and utterly destroyed it. The judgment dealt was terrible.



The Gibeonites deceive Joshua.

Young and old, male and female, as in most similar sieges, perished. God still permits in his providence what He commanded in this instance. But we know that, in the case of Jericho, it was a most guilty population that suffered so severe a judgment. Rahab and her family were the only exceptions. She was neither forgotten nor forsaken in the terrible catastrophe. God's word is sure; his promises are real. In this case it was the oath of his minister and servant that was sacredly observed. Hence it is twice told us that "Joshua saved her alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel unto this day."

But why should there be so extraordinary a scene about this city, and nothing like it about the other cities of Canaan? The answer is, it was the frontier city of Canaan—the stronghold of the Canaanites—the key, as it were, to the country; its destruction was most important, and, indeed, essential, and was, therefore, signalized by a special miracle. That other questions arise in connection with this is quite true. Why did not the God that clave the Red Sea, and divided the Jordan, at once transport them from the desert into the full possession of the land of Canaan? We cannot answer. All we know is, that He did not do so, and that the inspired record informs us that He did not do so.



The Sun Standing Still.



HIS miracle has been very rudely assailed by Dr. Colenso. A careful explanation is therefore requisite. Like all the assaults that have been levelled against the historic accuracy of Scripture, the attack on this has only served to confirm its truthfulness.

Joshua, according to the divine command, said, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon ; and thou moon, in the valley of Ajalon." Thus he seems to authorize the statement that "the sun stood still." But we know it is the rotation of the earth upon its axis that makes the eye seem to see the sun travelling across the sky, when really it is only the earth moving from the west on its axis towards the east. But suppose Joshua had said, "Earth, rest thou in thy diurnal rotation, and remain," no Israelite would have understood the miracle, and the popular mind of modern Europe would regard it as affectation. It never was the object of the Bible to teach astronomy, though it never contradicts its facts ; it was the design and it is the tendency of the Bible, in plain and intelligible language, to teach the great truths of God, of the soul, and of eternity. The language used here is still plain to all and popular. If we open our almanack, we shall find it therein constantly said the sun sets and the sun rises at certain hours. Astronomically, this is incorrect, but popularly it is



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JOSHUA COMMANDING THE SUN TO STAND STILL.

the best way of conveying very useful intelligence. Neither Sir Isaac Newton, if he were now living, nor Sir David Brewster, would either of them think of saying, in almanacks or in common conversation, the earth makes its revolution on its axis, or moves so many degrees round upon its axis; but they would say the sun rises and sets, as everybody else speaks; and they do what is perfectly right. Therefore the Word of God, instead of speaking in unphilosophical language, speaks according to common sense and daily usage, using popular words as the best vehicles of eternal and precious truth.

But how could this have happened as a fact without producing a tremendous catastrophe? We all know that if we were moving at the rate of fifty miles an hour in a railway carriage, and if that railway carriage were suddenly arrested, the impetus or forward force would be so great, that it would either throw us to a very great distance from it or dash us against the woodwork. So everybody knows, that if the earth, such is its tremendous speed, were, in its rotation on its axis—its imaginary axis—to be instantly arrested, every house, and castle, and rock, and tree, and human being, would be pitched into the air some miles into space, till probably some went within the range of the attraction of the moon itself, and landed there or in another planet, such would be its projectile force. Objectors assert, this arrest never could have taken place, or such a catastrophe would have occurred. The answer is obvious. We have Omnipotence, as here declared, to draw upon for the accomplishment of the fact; and the same Omnipotence, surely, that could arrest the earth on its axis, was able and adequate to arrest the ordinary consequences of it. People forget that this is not recorded as an accident, but as an express act of God Himself, and that He that wrought the miracle kept in his own hand the reserve power, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no further." And therefore, taking it as a divine and inspired record, we receive the

whole statement as fact, and are quite satisfied to believe that there was no day like that before it or after it; in other words, there were two days, and instead of being a day and a night, there was a day twenty-four hours long.

It is also important to remember, that a railway train may be arrested so gradually, that the passengers scarcely feel the change. So, we may argue, God need not have suddenly arrested the rotation of the earth. He may have gradually lessened it, till it ceased, and the orb stood still and no inconvenience was felt.

But the best and last answer is, it was the act of the Omnipotent Creator, and therefore not impossible. The maker of a watch has power to alter, stop, or modify it. Surely the Maker of the universe has no less power to slower or still the action of the mechanism of the universe. He alone was judge of the necessity or expediency of the miracle; and the fact that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" establishes the accuracy of the record. Miracles are supernatural phenomena. It is no miracle which has no omnipotence in it. To cavil here is to cavil at all miracles, and to reject miracles is practically to reject a personal Deity, and to trace all sequences to a great first cause, or to accident and chance.



The Wiles of the Gibeonites.



HESE Gibeonites were a portion of the aborigines of Canaan. They pretended to come from a distance, that therefore they might seem not to belong to those inhabitants of Canaan who, by a divine decree, were doomed to extermination. They brought old sacks, intended to indicate their long journey, in which they had been used and nearly worn out, and old, clouted, or patched shoes, to denote the length of their march. All this was gross deception.

Joshua said unto them, "Who are ye? and from whence come ye? And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come, because of the name of the Lord thy God: and our elders"—that is, their rulers, their governors—"said, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us." This was to make Joshua believe that they came spontaneously to recognize his mission and bow to his divine authority; and, pretending not to know they were sentenced to death, as all the people of Canaan were, they professed that they came out of spontaneous admiration of a great man, from deep conviction of the excellence of his policy, to make their submission to him, and get the best terms of peace they could possibly secure.

"The men"—that is, Joshua's followers—"took of their victuals"—or bread—"and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord. And the princes"—or chiefs—"of the congregation, swore unto them, saying, We will spare you;" which they had no commission to do. All Canaan was guilty; it was a land of criminals, doomed by God, and Joshua was merely the executioner of the great Judge's righteous sentence; and therefore the princes had no right to enter into a compact with these inhabitants, or to spare them upon any terms or conditions whatever. However, they did so; and when they discovered at last what they were, they were obliged to respect the solemn oath they had sworn, and to spare their lives; but they said, "We will make you"—what would be a degradation and a punishment—"hewers of wood and drawers of water;" two expressions used to denote the most menial purposes to which men could possibly be subjected. "And so did Joshua unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not. And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord."

They were pronounced "cursed," and were subjected to a severe calamity, and paid a bitter penalty for their deception! They and their children were doomed to the curse of a degrading bondage, and thereby the ancient denunciation against their ancestor was fulfilled: "Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be."

If David could say, "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness," these poor benighted heathen may well have esteemed their lot a blessing, hard and toilsome and humble as it was. They are supposed to have been afterwards called *Nethinim*; i.e., persons given, dedicated, consecrated to the service of the sanctuary and the assistance of the Levites.

Scripture is covered with the lights and shadows of daily life. It represents man, not only as he was, and will one day be, but as he is, and as sin has left him. God does not always justify what is recorded in his word, as he does not always approve what occurs in his providence. Some lives are buoys in the channel, others lights in the world, and others blanks in life. It is our duty to follow those who are portrayed in the sacred page as far as they followed Christ, and so run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.



Death of Joshua,



HIS eminent soldier, raised up by God to carry out the strange but often unavoidable mission of the sword, showed in his life what was conspicuous in his death—supreme confidence in God, unfaltering assurance of the fulfilment of the divine promises, and an ardent desire that the children of Israel should gratefully remember the goodness of God, and act worthy of the great cause entrusted to their care.

The best way to die well is to live well, whether the dying man be a soldier or a sailor, a clergyman or a layman—whether he die on the field of battle, or on his paternal acres, or in his humble home, if he dies in Christ, he lives with Christ evermore.

It was a glorious sight to see the aged soldier, looking away from the fields of conflict, give his last dying advice—the weightiest and the most solemn of all—to fear God, to love Him, and keep his commandments; for that thus only the victories he had gained would be the precursors of prosperity and lasting peace. War may secure a nation from the enemy, but it is piety that can create permanent peace in the midst of it—the peace that passeth understanding. Diplomacy may give temporary quiet; principle alone can give lasting peace. Management may give nations a respite, but only the spread and domination of living religion can make nations what

they ought to be, and what, by God's grace, they may be, blessings to themselves and benefactors to all around them.

Joshua, in his last hours, appeals to historic facts. He states it was by grace and in sovereignty that Abraham was selected on the other side of the Jordan, and made the father of a great nation. It was in sovereignty, and out of mere grace and love, that Moses and Aaron were raised up to emancipate, deliver, and guide them. It was in sovereignty and in great love that God put darkness between them and the Egyptians, and made the Red Sea cleave in twain, forming a dry and peaceful promenade for the children of Israel, while its waters collapsed and overwhelmed all the pursuing hosts of Pharaoh. It was in love that he made Balak pronounce the blessing, while he opened his lips to pronounce a curse, so that the blessing descended where he wished the curse to lighten. It was out of love that He drove out these nations—made the walls of Jericho fall to the earth before them—subdued Perizzites, and Hittites, and Hivites. “I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and therefore in possessing which you ought to have no pride. I have given you cities which you did not build, and in inhabiting which therefore you ought not to glory in man. I have given you vineyards and oliveyards which you did not plant, and therefore, when you eat the fruit and drink the wine thereof, you ought to praise Him whose smile has given to their blossoms all their beauty, and whose breath has given to the ripe fruit all its sweetness and its preciousness.”

Now, therefore, adds Joshua, as the result of all this, my advice to you as an aged man—an advice resulting from protracted experience in conflict and in peace, from personal and heartfelt experience, is, “Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth; put away all idols from the midst of the land; and do so by your own free, unconstrained election; for if it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, then you must decide; but you must take the responsibility. I cannot conceal from you the issue—that

the service of Jehovah will bring cloudless sunshine upon your cities, and your vineyards, and your provinces ; and that the service of the idols of the heathen will provoke his just and his righteous retribution." And he warns them himself, "I do not wish your blind allegiance ; for God is a holy God ; and if you to-day profess to belong to Him, and to-morrow go and serve the gods of the heathen, it would be better that you had not vowed to serve Him."

The veteran soldier died at the age of one hundred and ten years, and found a grave in Timnath-Serah. He finished his warfare, kept the faith, and entered into rest.





Hannah's Prayer.

Samson.



N angel appeared to Manoah's wife, and promised she should have a son. Manoah made the promise the subject of special prayer, and inquired earnestly how the promised child should be educated. "And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am. And Manoah said"—with great boldness; the boldness of Christian faith, not of human presumption—"Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?" He was most anxious that so remarkable a child should have a rare and remarkable education. Being a divine gift, he desired that his instruction should be inspired by the divine presence. The angel repeated all he had already said to the woman, and indicated her duty strictly to observe all he commanded. Manoah said, "Let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee." This Being appeared in human nature, and was recognized and visible as a man. "But he answered, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread;" as much as to say, I am a spiritual being; I subsist not by earthly bread; and, therefore, to ask me to partake of thy hospitality is to mistake my nature, my mission, and my office. "And if thou wilt

offer a burnt-offering, thou must offer it unto the Lord." I have no doubt these words imply that it was to be offered unto himself, for it is added, "Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the Lord;" literally translated, "The angel Jehovah."

Samson was born, grew up, and proved himself a man of extraordinary physical strength—a judge, a soldier, and a hero. He married a woman of the Philistines against his duty, against the will of the nation, the Church, and the people whose avenger he had become; and he therefore began to taste the bitter fruits of a marriage not, as the apostle requires it always to be, "in the Lord," but dictated by his own passion and preference. Accordingly, as he had mingled in family connexion with people that hated the living and the true God, the almost universal result came to ensue. He was contaminated by their principles, and his married life became a thorn in the flesh, that lasted till the very day of his death. It is a lesson that one ought never to omit to inculcate—all marriages should be, as the apostle says, in the Lord. The father of his wife wanted to take her from him, and to give her to another—that is, to the friend of the bridegroom. Wishing to see her in the harem, the place in which the women in Eastern countries still and in ancient times then were accustomed to meet, he found that her father would not suffer him even to see her, while, with true Philistine morality, he offered Samson the sister instead of the wife, whom he had disposed of after his own taste. A moral retribution runs through all this. Samson's wrath was kindled against all the Philistines, not from a divine spark, but from passion and in revenge. He seized three hundred foxes, and fastening them together, tail to tail, he tied to each couple a resinous ignited brand, let them loose in the corn fields, and thus destroyed the crops of the Philistines.

Instruments God does not approve are often compelled in providence to fulfil his purposes. The Philistines were a doomed because

a guilty race, and the very means that punished annoyed by their apparent insignificance.

As soon as the Philistines heard this, they resolved to punish Samson by destroying his wife and her father also. The moral retribution speedily came. Samson was punished, as recorded ; and his wife, who had acted so unfaithfully, and her father, who had acted so criminally, were both involved in the same dreadful retribution.

Samson determined to be avenged ; and therefore he smote them hip and thigh—as it were, completely, leaving not one behind—with a great slaughter, and went to the top of Mount Etam.

The men of Judah—and this shows how debased they had become—instead of maintaining a bold front of opposition to the Philistines, and prosecuting the mission entrusted to them, namely, to extirpate that race, came to terms with them, and submitted to the yoke of that very people whom they, out of false compassion, spared. These Hebrews resolved to bind Samson, in order to propitiate their masters. They had lost all patriotism, and all sense of duty and morality, all heroism of mind, all purity of heart ; and were prepared at any price to have peace with their masters, so as no longer to give them occasion to insult over them. They therefore seized, or rather sought the submission of, their greatest benefactor, bound him with cords, intending to hand him over to the Philistines, to do with him as they pleased. But, on their binding him, he burst the cords as if they had been flax exposed to the flame, and thereby showed the prodigious physical strength with which he was endued. As if to evince, at the same time, the greater degradation of the Philistines, and to make the instrument with which he destroyed them a memorial of their shame, he took a new jaw-bone—that is, not decayed, and therefore retaining great strength in it—of an ass, and with that mean instrument, so mean as to make the memory of the slain ignoble and degraded, he slew a thousand men. And he called the place where he hrew it down Ramath-lehi.

Being thirsty, and expecting to die of thirst, and to fall into the hands of the uncircumcised, God heard his prayer, and clave a hollow place—not, as in our translation, in the “jaw-bone.” The Hebrew word *lehi* means a jaw-bone, and the place where he threw down the jaw-bone was called Ramath-lehi. God clave a fountain, not in the jaw-bone, but in the place in which he threw down the jaw-bone, namely, on the ground. The fountain was hollowed out by the hand of God, and thence came water. And he called the name of the place, most beautifully, En-hakkor; namely, “The place provided for him that called upon his God;” “and it is in Lehi unto this day.”

Samson was the representation of the greatest physical strength; Solomon was the type of the richest intellectual wisdom. Each had his gift by special grant, and both were employed for special ends.

His wife, really his enemy, pressed him till his soul was vexed unto death by her persistent entreaties, her eloquent and touching appeals. At last, worn out, weary, able to stand it no more, he let out his secret. The secret of his strength was not in his hair, but in his vow as a Nazarite; the condition of which was, that as long as he allowed his hair to grow, which a Nazarite was bound to do, and not taste wine, so long his great strength would be in him; but the moment he did what was incompatible with the vow, shave off his hair, he would become as other men.

He fell asleep after he had told her, resting his head upon her knee. In India one may often see a young man of eighteen or twenty—the mother seated on the carpet, not in a chair, as is the case in European latitudes—lean his head upon his mother’s knee, and fall sweetly asleep. Samson, according to Eastern customs, did so; and then they brought a razor, and shaved his hair from his head. How could this be done without his waking? Easily. The sensation is rather soothing and agreeable than the reverse. What was done here was neither impossible nor improbable. Having thus taken off

his hair, she roused him by crying, "The Philistines be upon thee ! And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself"—little knowing what a change had taken place—"and he wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

The lords of the Philistines gave their god Dagon all the credit of their success, and resolved to glorify that god by the destruction of Samson, the enemy of their country. He must be made a show first. There were assembled all the aristocracy, and all the soldiers, and men, and great ladies of the Philistines, on the roof, and probably on scaffoldings, erected for the grand exhibition which was to take place of this vanquished strong man. It has been matter of great dispute how it was possible that his pulling down the two pillars could upset the whole house. Sir Christopher Wren, the eminent architect, the builder of St. Paul's, was consulted upon this subject ; and the explanation he gave was, that in all probability it was a roof of cedar, that there might have been one hundred or one hundred and twenty enormous beams, of great strength, all meeting at the centre. But as it would be impossible, or very improbable, that any pillar could be found on which all the ends of these beams could rest, as each approached a radius from the circumference—that there were two pillars, and an architrave connected with them, and that all the beams met together upon this short architrave, sustained by two pillars, each beam coming from the circumference of the vast building—that Samson stood between the pillars on which the architrave was ; his strength was restored by his repentance, and he put forth his whole strength, and brought down the vast edifice, involving in its ruin the lords of the Philistines, and perishing himself in the catastrophe.

So great gifts may exist, and great sins and imperfections. Grace is infinitely more precious than gifts. One first false step conducts to many evils. This giant suicide, "being dead, speaks" to us.

Hannah.



HIS woman, the wife of Elkanah, was greatly distressed because she had no children. To a Jewish mother, this was always regarded as matter of sorrow, and even of shame. Many a mother nevertheless has lived to lament the day on which it was told her that a man-child was born. We do not know absolutely what is best for us. Perhaps our lot, whatever it may be, is, after all, that which in the mind of God is most expedient, and, all things considered, most contributory to our present progress and everlasting good.

Hannah did more than regret. She became fretful. She murmured and complained as if she had been treated unjustly. On one occasion, while Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post at the temple of the Lord, Hannah, in great bitterness of soul, wept and prayed unto the Lord, and vowed a vow, that if the Lord would give her a son, he should be consecrated to the service of the Lord as a Nazarite. The intensity of her emotions and prayers arrested the notice of Eli. He most rashly and uncharitably concluded she was drunk with wine, and rebuked her, saying, "How long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee." Hannah's grief was too deep to admit of her being angry. She therefore meekly replied, "No, my lord; I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul

before the Lord." Eli, like a Christian, corrected his first hasty and unjust impression, and answered, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition."

God at length gave her what she had so persistently prayed for. Samuel was born. Hannah, however, deferred appearing in public before the Lord till she had weaned the child; after which she brought him into the house of the Lord in Shiloh; with sacrifice presented by Eli on her behalf. On this occasion she told Eli, "Oh, my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore, also, I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth, he shall be lent to the Lord."

Thus what we receive in answer to prayer we should return on the breath of praise. He is not a long possessor or a happy possessor of good things of which he is not a thankful possessor.

Children asked in prayer, and presented to the Lord in praise, are most likely to prove blessings to their parents, useful to others, and of service to God. Our gifts and graces, in their origin, tenure, and destiny, should be the Lord's. Every Samuel—*i.e.*, "asked of God"—should be devoted to God. Hannah's song of praise takes its place with the Virgin Mary's and Elizabeth's. "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord. . . . I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord, for there is none beside thee, neither is there any rock like our God. . . . He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill; to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He hath set the world upon them."



Samuel's Call.



SAMUEL was lent to the Lord by his mother, and he justified her highest and holiest aspirations. One day, Eli, old, and almost blind, and very feeble, lay down in his place. The aged priest was soon to leave the service of the temple on earth for that of the temple not made with hands. Just as the lamp began to burn dim, Samuel had lain down to sleep where the ark of God was. In the silence, solemnity, and darkness of the sacred edifice, a voice was heard by Samuel, calling him by name three times in succession. Samuel fancied it was Eli's voice, and accordingly asked him what he required. Eli believed the voice was that of God, and therefore told young Samuel to answer, should he again be summoned in like manner, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." God called to Samuel again, and told him that He was about to inflict great judgments on the house of Eli, because of the wickedness of his sons, and his connivance thereat. Eli, suspecting that some such message must have been given, called Samuel, and asked, "What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee?" Samuel told him all; and Eli, weary with the weight of years, and too keenly conscious of his sins, exclaimed, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good"—the language of humble submission and felt unworthiness. So said the patriarch Job, "The Lord

gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord."

The sons of Eli were the grief of the aged priest's heart, and the scandal of Israel. Things sacred and secular they equally abused. Their relation to the priest made their conduct the more notorious and reprehensible. The wickedness of the son casts a shadow on the honour of the parent ; and the highest official dignity in the State and the most sacred office in the sanctuary are equally lowered by the dishonourable character and conduct of the children of those that are clothed with them.

In this case Eli was worthy of censure. Easy-minded, affectionate, and reluctant to see the sins of his sons, he found fault in gentle words, instead of firmly rebuking what all Israel saw and deplored in their conduct. He connived when he should have condemned, and trifled where he should have sternly repressed. The management of children is difficult, but affection ought never to be made the grave of duty, nor should a parent forget he is also the master and ruler of his house.

God interferes, and pronounces, "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. . . . There shall not be an old man in thy house ; . . . and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age. And this shall be a sign unto thee, in one day thy two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall die, both of them." This was a very awful menace, and must have almost broken the heart of the aged father. Such retribution still strikes—not, perhaps, always in the same form, but no less surely, where it has been as justly provoked.

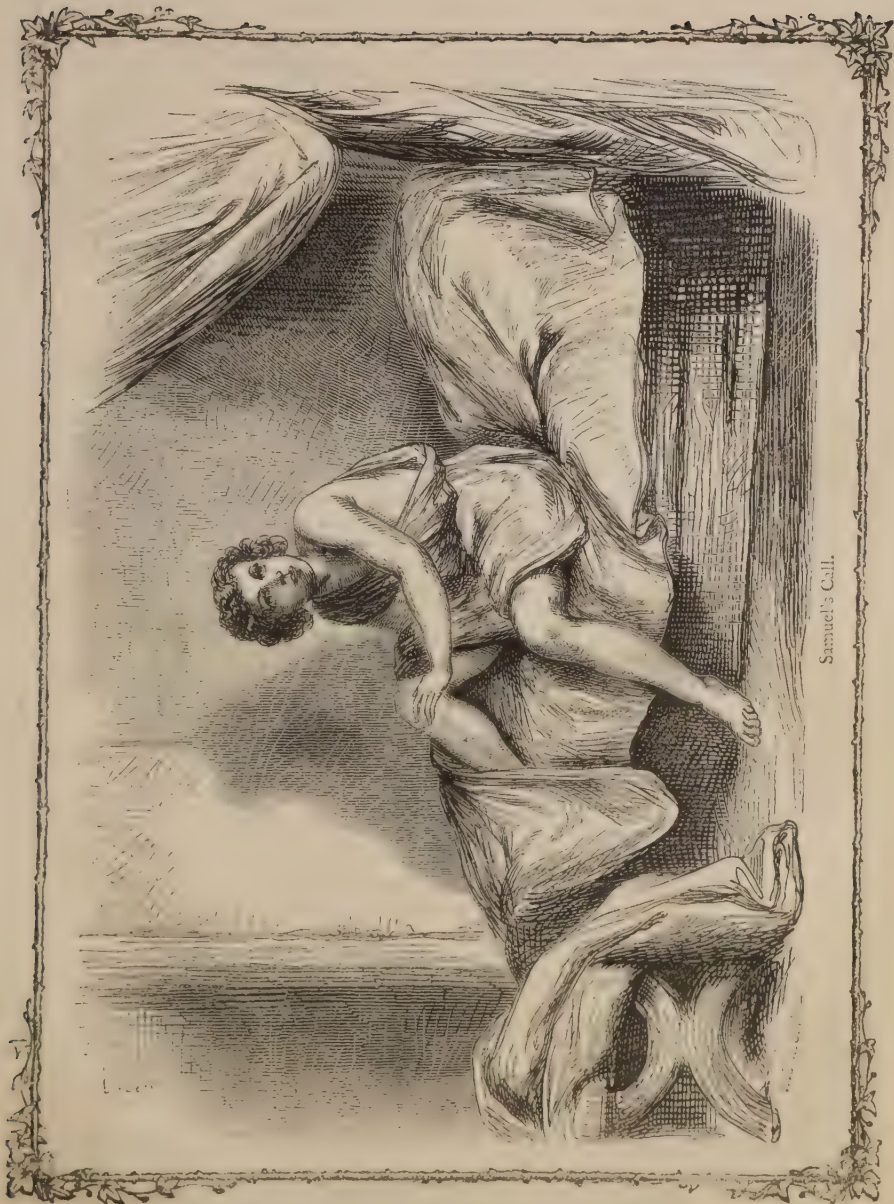
But while the heart of the father must have grieved, the mind of the priest must have been so far gladdened, being relieved by a gleam of sunshine breaking through the canopy of cloud. "I will raise me up a faithful priest, who shall do according to that which is in mine heart, and in my mind ; and I will build him a sure

house, and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever." The desolation of his home it was promised should not be the destruction of the temple. Eli must retire from the altar, but there will still be a victim for sacrifice, and a priest to offer it. The unfaithfulness of the minister shall not affect the progress of the work, or arrest the victory of the Lord. Let us strive by our faithfulness to advance those everlasting interests which must otherwise be carried out over our graves. Let life be a spontaneous offering, not a reluctant sacrifice.

God made a youth the preacher to Eli. Samuel grew in every Christian grace, and received richly from God every prophetic gift, and his fame as a prophet of the Most High spread from one end of the land to the other.

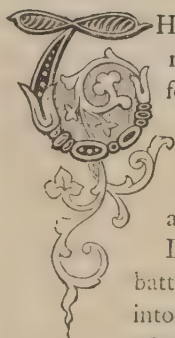
What an encouragement to mothers to lend their children early to God! Early prayers and lessons, sustained by a holy and beautiful example, are never in vain. What a warning to fathers, never to be silent when their children do wrong! Had Eli rebuked Hophni and Phinchas in early days, they had not grown up a burden to his heart. Eli's life was holy and pure; but his affection to his sons made him blind to their iniquities—or if not blind, silent when he ought earnestly and solemnly to have rebuked them. He had intrusted to his charge, not only his house, but the temple and service of God. No parental affection ought to have interfered with his sacred duties as a priest. But God showed that it is no true love that refuses to rebuke sin, or to suffer youth to grow up in the practice of evil.





Samuel's Call.

Death of Eli.



HERE occurs a beautiful instance of meek submission on the part of this aged priest, which forms the redeeming trait in his character. In the distance is seen the dust of a battle-field; the wind of heaven carrying to Shiloh the shouts of the camp, and the tumultuous noises, its accompaniments. The Israelites were defeated.

Determined to venture once more on the issues of battle, they send for the ark of the Lord, and bring it into the midst of the guilty camp, thinking the presence of the sacred symbol would give victory. Instead of repenting of their sins, and seeking forgiveness from the Lord, they trust superstitiously to a sacred symbol, and look for victory from it. In another part of the same scene there sits by the wayside the aged priest in Shiloh, anxious, full of fears and forebodings, earnestly inquiring if any tidings have come from the battle-field—having, what is often in the human heart, a fiercer battle within than was waged upon the field without—conscious of personal and national sin, grieved at what he saw, and verging in feeling on despondency and despair, and intensely anxious to know the issues of that conflict—having a stake in it greater, perhaps, than any priest or Levite in all Israel. What explains this anxiety for the ark of the Lord in the case of Eli—best explains it in the case of every true Christian—it is,

ardent love to the ark, or unmingled affection to the gospel, and to Him who is its author. Let us mark this feature in the case of Eli. A messenger, who had left the din and the shouts of battle, rushes to his presence, and tells Eli that the tide of war had prevailed against Israel, that its banners were trampled in the dust, and his country degraded before the whole world. Eli was a patriot; he must have deeply felt so great calamity as had fallen upon his fatherland; but he suffered this, and was silent. The messenger adds, as a distinct fact, that there had been a great slaughter of his countrymen, and much blood had been shed upon the battle-field, and thirty thousand of Israel's noblest infantry had been gathered to a gory grave. Eli was a humane and a feeling man, and he must have deeply felt this; but he makes no remark—he has grace to bear it. The messenger states a third fact—that his own and only sons, Hophni and Phinehas, had fallen in the strife, and lay dead upon the field. Eli was a parent, and had parental affections, deep, and strong, and full; but he meekly bows his head, patiently resigns his heart, and here also feels and remembers, “It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good.” The messenger added a fourth fact, that the ark of the Lord was taken; and when Eli heard—for Eli was a Christian, and God's glory and the salvation of souls the weightiest and most momentous concern in the old man's heart—that the ark of the Lord was taken, the current of his emotions rose like an overwhelming tide against the sands, burst the channels in which they flowed, and he bowed his head and fell to the earth, because the ark of the Lord was taken. What ardent love was here! Love to his country, which was right; love to humanity, which was right; love to his children, which was right; but a love that superseded and overwhelmed all these—his love to his God. The last catastrophe he was unable to bear, and his heart broke, and his spirit left this scene of sin and suffering, and entered into rest.

The Israelites sinned by placing the holy ark amid the collision of human passions. May we not sin in indulging in those angry and sectarian rivalries, those ecclesiastical quarrels, those disputes about discipline and mere ceremonials, which poison the air we breathe, and render slow the growth of Christianity in the midst of us? For vital truth we must contend earnestly—against deadly error we should protest with all our might; but in those things on which Christians differ, those minor and circumstantial things which we shall not see eye to eye until the very margin of the millennial morn, we should be satisfied to agree to differ. But too many care less what becomes of the ark, and far more who shall be the drivers of the oxen that draw the ark. Too many are more anxious about their shibboleth, than they are about righteousness, and peace, and joy—the constituent elements of the kingdom of heaven? Storms may be necessary to purify the air, but sweet flowers do not blossom in them; controversy may be necessary to lay the foundation of the church, but it is in calm and in sunshine that its superstructure is best reared. As soon as we have secured what every day is becoming nearer, the ascendancy of essential truth, so soon we should lapse into comparative indifferentism as to the mutable circumstantials in which it may be set.



Samuel Anointing Saul.



SON of Kish, a Benjamite, whose name was Saul, tall and imposing in appearance, and easily distinguished by the height of his stature from the rest of the people, was sent, as the world would say, accidentally, to seek for the stray cattle of his father. He went through several places along with his servant, but failed to find them in any one of them. At last the servant suggested that there was a man of God—that is, a seer or a prophet—whom they might consult about the stray cattle, if peradventure they might find them; a very striking and suggestive proof that man will inquire at every oracle to recover lost property, when he will not be at the trouble to read God's word, to ascertain and find the safety of his lost soul. They had never thought of going to this prophet before, and they were now to employ him, if he would consent to be so employed, in a most servile work; and therefore they agreed to consult him. The servant said to Saul, "I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: that will I give to the man of God to tell us our way." This was not meant as a bribe to induce his favourable opinion; for it was the custom for one person inferior in rank or in office approaching another, to make him a present, however small it might be—and it was generally small—merely to express deference, and courtesy, and respect. It was not

here intended by Saul to be a bribe to Samuel, nor did Samuel accept it as a bribe in any sense whatever. "As they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here? And they answered them, and said, He is." God stated to Samuel, "To-morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel."

God sends Saul, while it was seemingly his father that sent him. It was the loss of his father's cattle that made it necessary to send him; it was the accident of meeting with the maidens drawing water that enabled him to find out where Samuel was, and so helped Samuel to find Saul; and yet all the while it was God who sent Saul to Samuel, and Samuel to Saul; a proof how man's free will is compatible with God's sovereign agency—the one fulfilling the decisions of the other, not the one in any shape contradicting or destroying the other.

When Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, he said, not knowing he was Samuel, "Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is." The word "seer," in Hebrew, means simply "one that sees;" meaning, of course, sees higher, deeper, further than other people. Samuel answered at once, "I am the seer." Turning away Saul's thoughts from his lost cattle, he said, "As for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them, for they are found. There is a far greater matter in hand; let the dead bury their dead; care not about these terrestrial and transient things; I have to talk with you about a greater mission, a grander and more precious object." When Samuel hinted to him that a great destiny was before him, and a splendid mission entrusted to him, Saul answered, "This is impossible; am I not a Benjamite, one of the smallest and most contemptible of the tribes of Israel, and my family the very least and obscurest of all the families of Benjamin! wherefore speakest thou so to me?" He meant, "You mock

me ; it is impossible that I should be selected for so great a destiny." But Samuel took him, and made him sit in the chiefest place, and share the rights of hospitality, which were the symbols of friendship, and communion, and love ; and then he told him that he wished to talk with him on the top of the house. Now in eastern countries, the roof of the house is used as the place for conference at early morn and at evening twilight ; and therefore he asked him to come and talk with him there, as the most sequestered and secluded place. And "Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance ?"

Samuel called the people together, and told them that God had commissioned him to say that they had that day rejected Him. "Ye have this day rejected your God, who Himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations ; and ye have said unto Him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now, therefore, present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes, and by your thousands ;" that is to say, "Though you have rejected God, though you have asked for what is not right, God has given you what you ask ; and He now orders you to take the steps to accomplish the desire of your hearts." Samuel caused all the tribes to come near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken ; then out of the tribe of Benjamin a family, and then out of that family one man—Saul : but when they sought him, they could not find him. "Therefore they inquired of the Lord further, if the man should yet come thither. And the Lord answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff. And they ran and fetched him thence." Then Samuel presented him, and said, "Here is the personage you asked, ready to fulfil the duties you have devolved upon him ; and now, accept him as your king, anointed of God, and in all respects such a king as you would have." As soon as the people beheld Saul, they recognized him as their chosen king, saying, "God save the king."

The Rejection of Saul.



OD, for wise and righteous ends, ordered Saul to destroy Amalek—a powerful tribe, dwelling east of the Cushites, and most aggressive in their nomad excursions. In this case there was no margin left for the conduct of Saul, beyond the exact duty which God imposed on him. He was ordered to exterminate the race, without any exception. He accepted the mission, assembled the people, and gave every token of preparation to carry out the orders of Heaven without reserve.

But Saul did not defer to God's command, for he spared Agag, the Amalekite king, and made him a prisoner. This was unfaithfulness in executing the sovereign purpose of Heaven—an unfaithfulness that arose from vain-glory. He, no doubt, desired to carry home the royal captive as a living witness to his bravery and genius as a commander; and so far he disobeyed an express divine order, and, in doing so, showed he was not qualified to be king of Israel. We may be always sure that God's way, however unacceptable to us, is the right way, and our own way, however palatable, the least expedient of all. God said to Samuel, "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul." This means, not a change of mind, but a change of action. Saul, meanwhile, came to Carmel, where he raised a monument to himself; the memorial he intended it to be of splendid

generalship—an evidence, in truth, of his vain-glory. He told Samuel that he had done God's will. This was untrue, and his so saying was also hypocrisy. Samuel, as the servant of God, charged him with rebellion against the Most High. But Saul, with gross hypocrisy, told him the reserved sheep, whose bleating testified against him, were intended as sacrifices to God—the language of shuffling dishonesty, only equalled by a second pretext which he used when he said it was all because “he feared the people,” and was compelled to do, not what God ordered, but what the people insisted on.

Samuel, divinely inspired, pronounced sentence of deposition on Saul, and on his family, whose succession to the throne ceased from the utterance of that sentence. Saul made every exertion to soften the effects of the sentence, and to compromise Samuel in his movements. His repentance was mere pretence, his piety hypocrisy, and his efforts to alter or modify a just and holy sentence utterly failed. Samuel executed the judgment on Agag, and thus accomplished the solemn retribution which Saul refused to inflict.

God works with us, and without us, and sometimes against us. Saul was a wilful, vain, and foolish despot. His passions carried him whithersoever they would. His pride and vain-glory wrought his ruin; and under the shadow of that throne he might have occupied with dignity and honour, he learned in shame and sorrow, obedience is better than sacrifice.



"To Obey is Better than Sacrifice."

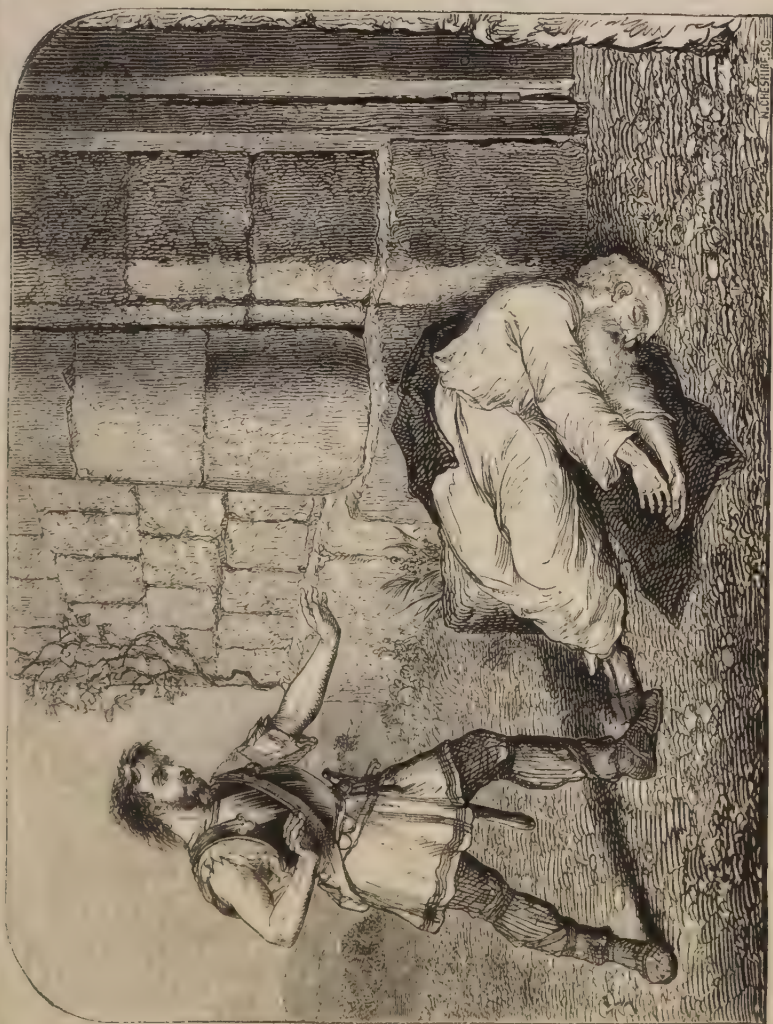
(1 Sam. xv. 22.)

MAN does not always think so. He would rather take part in a splendid ceremonial than obey the plain commandments of God. In engaging in the former, he attracts the admiration of man, makes capital in the world, and appears to human eyes an exemplary devotee. In obeying the latter, he is seen only by God, and approved at that tribunal which human eyes do not see. It is much easier to do penance, which is the sacrifice of bodily comfort, than to repent, which concerns the heart. It is much easier to fast than it is to abstain from the indulgence of passions cherished by a carnal and corrupt nature. It is more agreeable to the unsanctified man to go to church, and join in its ceremonial, and seem to men to worship, than to go to God in humility of heart, imploring pardon for sin, and purification of nature. To stand in the corners of the streets, and make long prayers, in order to be seen of men, was the favourite practice of the Pharisees, while they devoured widows' houses, pillaged the orphan, and trampled on mercy, and temperance, and justice. Saul had no objection to "come before the Lord with burnt-offerings, with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil." But he retained an invincible objection to "do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God."

It too often happens that those who are most stringent about forms and ceremonies are most lax about doctrinal truths and moral conduct. They can pay God more than He demands of sacrifices, but they know they cannot reach the height of his demands in moral obedience. No sacrifice or offering of meats, and drinks, and music, and incense and attitudes, and dresses, and vestments, in the remotest degree approaches the sublime service of love to God in the pious heart unfolding its inspiration in daily, humble, and unswerving obedience. An ounce of love is worth a ton of ceremonial. One act of loyalty and service to Christ is more welcome in heaven a thousand-fold than clouds of ascending aromatic incense. It is inner spiritual life, flowing forth in whatsoever things are pure, and just, and honest, and lovely, and of good report, that indicates and seals the Christian. It is obedience, not ritual sacrifices, that is the signature of a Christian.

It matters little in the sight of God what dress we wear, what form we prefer; but it is of infinite importance that we love and obey Him. "The kingdom of God" it is most beautifully and succinctly declared, "is not meat or drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." "The sacrifices of God" are not such as Saul thought sufficient, or such as make a show before the eyes of others, but "a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart." It was true under a ritual and richly ceremonial dispensation, and assuredly not less so where God is worshipped in spirit and in truth, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it Thee. Thou delightest not in burnt-offerings."

To "owe no man anything, but to love one another"—to "live soberly, righteously, and godly," is to obey; and such obedience outweighs in worth and evidence of Christian character such sacrifices as "building the tombs of the prophets, and garnishing the sepulchres of the righteous, and making long prayers and broad phylacteries."



Death of Eli.

The Death of Samuel.



AND Samuel died ; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran (1 Sam. xxv. 1). These words are fitted to impart consolation to them that mourn, as well as directions to those who are well. Eli misinterpreted the sorrow of Hannah, and imputed to her as crime that which was simply misfortune. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, recognized him as the gift of the Lord, and called him Samuel in order to perpetuate that impression. She dedicated the child to the Lord, in her own beautiful language "lending him" to God. By and by Samuel ministered before the Lord, appearing in the high places of the land as priest, and prophet, and judge. He is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as Samuel the prophet ; he is quoted in the shining roll of the illustrious saints in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews as not the least conspicuous of those who lived by faith, died in Christ, and obtained the promises. And now we have the last act of his life. "And Samuel died." It seems strange that so illustrious a light should be thus prematurely quenched, and that one whose presence had shed showers of blessings upon the land of Israel should be removed from the scene.

Whoever may deny or say there is no sin, we never yet heard any one say there is no sorrow. All have tasted of that cup which death, or rather the Lord of death, who sends him as his servant, mingles; and have felt the silence that succeeds the loss of those we love, the aching blank where all was filled before, and the falling of that curtain which will never be lifted up until the trumpet sound, and the dead in Christ shall be raised. We know not why Samuel was taken away, nor do we know why our brethren and sisters in Christ are taken away; but of this we are sure that whether it be the death of a babe, or the death of an advanced saint, the death of the obscurest widow, or of the most illustrious potentate upon earth, there was and can be no such thing as chance. The accidents of men are the consecrated missionaries of God; what seems to us accidental is a response to the touch of Him who rules and reigns; and the death which we may deplore happened just at the time that was best for each and all, and most for the glory of God. If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without God's cognisance, if a hair of the head cannot drop without his permission, can we suppose that a Christian dies, and a soul enters into heaven an unexpected visiter, without the arrangement, the knowledge, and the permission of God? We know not, it is true, when we shall die, and it is well that it is so. No one dies at the time when he expects he will die; in every instance men's calculations are proved to have been wrong. Some die gently, the frail tenement wasting away to a transparency that yields to the very first ray of the morning light; in others the spring of life does not seem gradually to uncoil, but to snap at once; and by pressure upon the brain, a halt in the heart, what the world calls an accident on the sea, an incident on the railroad, the puncture of a sting, the flash from the storm-cloud—a thousand incidents and accidents, as they are called—a man's soul stands either rejoicing or trembling at the judgment-seat, and the body returns to its kindred dust. If this be the case, why this uncertainty in our death? I

believe if man, unconverted and unsanctified man, knew precisely the day when he should die, first it would be misery to him, secondly it would have less practical effect upon his moral and spiritual character; and, therefore, since death has come, as the consequence of sin, it is well, and wisely, and beneficently arranged that we shall know that the fact must be, but shall be ignorant when it will be; so that every journey we take we may feel, "This journey may be my funeral march;" so that every voyage that we enter on we may feel, "This voyage may land me on the shores of the eternal world;" and that at every night's sleep we may feel, as we ascend the stairs to lie down upon our beds, that we may be called upon ere the morning dawn to ascend many steps higher, and to stand at the judgment-seat of God.

If this be fact, not merely the fancy of a painter, let me ask, what would this change be to us? What would it be now, suppose this sun is to shine our last—suppose this Sabbath is to be our last—suppose that trembling thing called life shall cease, and the heart, weary with its march, stand still, and the soul, finding no more a congenial house for it to dwell in, goes up to God at his bidding? Are you clothed in that spotless righteousness, your only trust and plea, which alone is your right to heaven? Have you settled this question of common sense, this question of reality and truth—this first, this last, this most momentous question, "What must I do to be saved?" Have you really looked at that question in all its breadth and length? Have you looked upon it as a reality? Have you discussed it? Have you not simply heard it, but given it hospitality in your heart, and not let the discussion of it go till you have found Him in whom alone there is pardon, in whom alone there is justification, and from whom alone can come down to you and dwell in you that Blessed and Holy Spirit who makes the heart right, and the spirit willing, and the whole nature fit for the kingdom of glory?

People generally expect to go to heaven. I daresay there is no human being who expects to go to hell. If, then, you all expect to go to heaven, let me ask, what do you expect to do in heaven? What are you to be about in heaven? You surely ought to look at that; and if you can ascertain what they that are there do, you will then be able to determine whether you are going to heaven, or likely to have a place in it, or employments and enjoyments amid its sunny and its blessed atmosphere. What do they do in heaven? Because if they there meditate on the glory of God, and you never had five minutes' thought upon the subject—if they there sing the praises of Him that loved them, and washed them in his precious blood—if they there study the unfolding glories, and the nearing wonders, and the dawning beauties of creation, of providence, of redemption—if it be a continual Sabbath, and such it is (the Greek word in the Epistle to the Hebrews shows it, "There remaineth a rest;" it is in the Greek, *σαββατισμος*, "a Sabbath keeping for the people of God"), then you may determine now whether you are on the way to heaven. What is the Sabbath to you? Is it a day of delight—a day of practical, sweet, and profitable reflection? Is the sanctuary dear to you? Do you love the eve of Saturday for the sake of the day that succeeds it? Could you spend endless Sabbaths taken up with the studies, and the subjects, and the topics, so varied and so interesting, that are contained in the Bible? If the Sabbath be to you a weary day, what will heaven be? If you cannot think of God now, are you not unprepared, undisciplined, untrained, for thinking of Him and dwelling with Him for ever? Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people; and if we are not prepared for it now, there is no preparation beyond death and the grave.

But I turn to the lamentation, wherewith all Israel lamented. There is lamentation over the dead that is sinful; the sorrow that is natural and right; and the sorrow for lost or separated friends that is spiritual and holy. In other words, there are three varieties

of sorrow felt at the loss of relatives and friends near and dear to us; there is the sorrow that is sinful, there is the sorrow that is human and natural, and there is the sorrow that is spiritual, and holy, and Christian. The very worst feature in a sorrow felt for the loss of those that we love, is when the sorrow is unsubmitive; when it refuses to say, "Thy will be done;" when it rebels against the sentiment, "The cup that my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?" when it calls the blow hard, pronounces the dispensation cruel, and murmurs and repines against God. Christian submission is not incompatible with poignant and piercing grief; and to feel in the depths of our hearts, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away," is not to be insensible to our loss, but on the contrary, it is to have that grief diluted and that sorrow subdued and softened by this blessed persuasion, that it is a Father's dispensation, that it was in some way, though we see it not, the manifestation of a Father's love; and if we cannot explain all its nature now, we can settle down with this cheering, this sustaining thought, "What I know not now I shall know hereafter." Wherever there is unsubmitive sorrow, God frequently, not in anger, but in paternal love, adds affliction to affliction. When a first affliction is not sanctified, a second one is sent; and when a second one is not enough, a third. Wherever God has chosen one to be the heir of everlasting glory, He will take care that affliction on affliction shall not be withheld till the proud spirit bows, and the hard heart breaks, and the soul exclaims what it feels, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

An instance illustrative of this is recorded of a Christian mother. She says, "After my husband died I mourned bitterly, but I then turned to my children for comfort there. When my first child died, all my grief came back. My second child died, and I murmured. The third child died, and I was wholly rebellious; I thought God was cruel, and severe, and unjust, and a tyrant. My fourth and only

remaining child has just died ; now I know that the rod was in my Father's hand, and that that rod was cut from the tree of life. The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord." There is not only a sorrow for the dead that is unsubmitive, but a sorrow that is inconsolable. Some overwhelming stroke has smitten down the desire of your eyes ; one in whom all the affections of your heart were centred, has passed into the shadow of the grave ; and as you recollect the loss and feel its poignancy, like Rachel you weep, and you will not be comforted.

These afflictions are painful, most painful ; but inconsolable sorrow the Bible condemns. "I would not have you," says the Apostle, "to sorrow as those that have no hope." Our dead are buried in a world on which Christ's cross stood ; we are in a fallen, but neither a forgotten nor a forsaken world. And if nothing happens by chance, and if the lost to us are gained to glory, then to sorrow as those that have no hope, to be inconsolable, is to act a most unworthy and inconsistent part in the sight of God. Then there is, in the next place, a sorrow that is sinful and wrong, which springs from thinking only of the dead dust, and of the cold clay, and of its damp dark resting place. Too many of us, when a near relative dies, think only of the accompaniments of the tomb, of the coldness, and the darkness, and the solitariness that are there. Have you not heard a mother weeping for her children, for an only child, saying, "No kind word now comes from his lips, no sweet expression of affection can now be imprinted on his once fair and beautiful brow" ? and the sorrow that she felt for the lost is intensified and deepened by the recollection of such accompaniments as these. But such sorrow as this is unchristian ; the lost to you has not ceased to live but only ceased to be seen. The grave contains the worn out garment or the torn robe, unfit for the glorious wearer ; it is laid up in the wardrobe of the grave till Jesus brings it forth in all its resurrection beauty, and the wearer, the spirit that laid it down,

has ascended unto Christ's Father and our Father, unto Christ's God and our God. And if we had a choice, rather would I be buried in the loneliest grave in the valley, because Christ lay in it, than ascend like Elijah in a chariot of fire and horses of flame, a way by which Christ did not ascend. That grave has been consecrated for us ; the Rod of Jesse, bruised and broken, was laid in it ; but it blossomed in that grave far more beautifully than Aaron's rod of old, and has filled it with its perfume, and left behind it the imperishable hope of the resurrection and the life to come. There is a sorrow or lamentation for our dead, which springs from not clearly and distinctly realizing restoration and reunion in heaven. Silence the voice of Scripture, shut up the New Testament, and you may sorrow, and lament, and weep bitterly. But open this blessed book, and what does it tell me ? In the very first place, death is ours ; the heathen is constrained to say, "We are death's : his victims ;" but the glorious truth, the very reversal of this, is inscribed upon the sacred page, death is ours ; that is, instead of we being his victims, he is our servant to carry us to the presence of Him in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. And if those that we have lost lived in Christ and died in Him, then the few years that are yet to elapse will soon run their course, their current will soon be exhausted, and we shall meet amid glories, and joys, and communion, and reunion, which in our present dim and dead state eye hath not seen, and ear hath not heard the music of, nor hath it entered into man's heart to conceive the glory, and the magnificence of it. Let the body go the way of all flesh, if the soul goes the way of all holy spirits into heaven.

But the worst and the last kind of unsanctified, and therefore sinful sorrow, that I shall mention, is sorrow that is not sanctified to you. I know no greater calamity to any man than to be the victim of a bitter misfortune, and to be made no holier in consequence ; or to have escaped from a terrible death, and not to have that escape

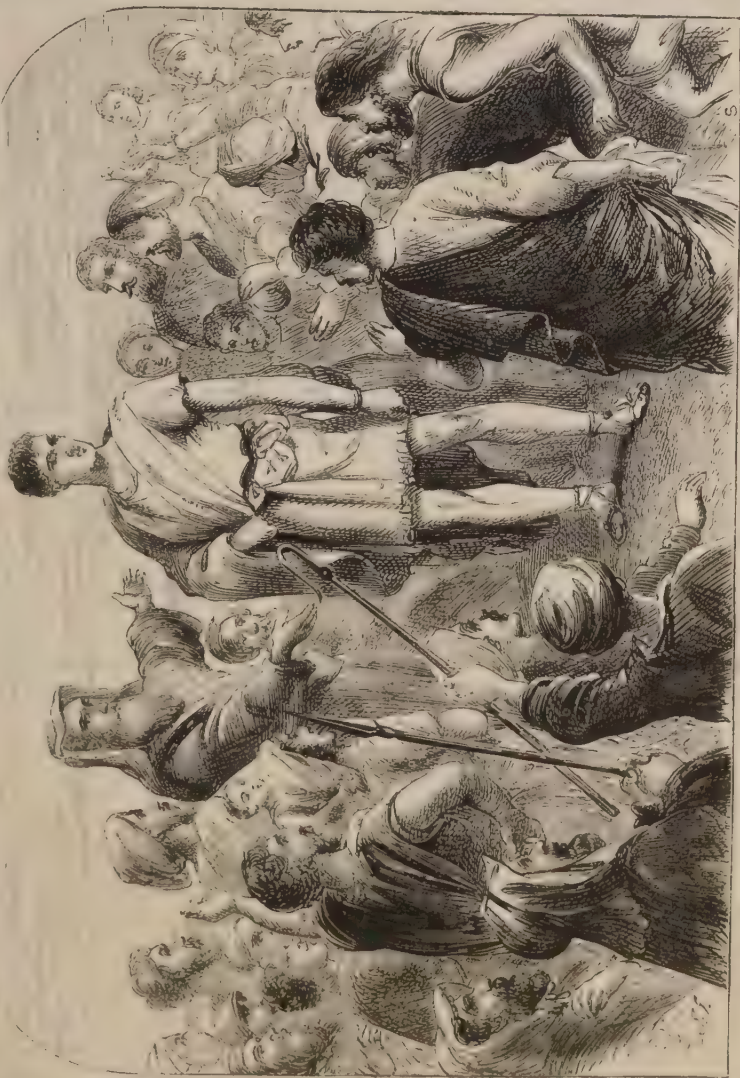
sanctified to him. And if your sorrow for the lost at this moment merely withdraws you from the world for a little, makes you retire from its exciting and its busy scenes, take a less absorbing interest in it, clothes you with a few momentary weeds of woe; and after a few months have elapsed you plunge deeper into the world, indulge in intenser thoughtlessness about living religion, the soul, God, and eternity to come; if your grief does not permanently wean you from the world; if your loss is not so sanctified to you that it lifts your heart many degrees higher into heaven, and enables you while in the world less and less to be of the world,—such loss is indeed judicial infliction, a hardening judgment, an emanation from below, not a dispensation from above; and of all men, he is most to be pitied whose losses, trials, sicknesses, dangers, and vows, have all passed away almost from his memory, entirely from his heart, and only left him an intenser worldling than he was before.

Such are various forms of unsanctified sorrow; there is a sorrow for our dead that is right, though purely human. It is important in condemning sorrow that is sinful, not to involve in the same censure sorrow that is human. There is nothing wrong in our humanity but sin; every passion in our nature now is the perversion of something that was originally good. There is a sorrow that in itself is right, though it be purely human. For instance, we recall seasons of delightful communion that have now passed away; sacrifices made for us, kind advices and gentle words addressed to us; that voice is hushed, that presence is gone away like a shadow from the dial, and a blank is left behind, intense, bitter, and at first almost intolerable; and when we recollect the joy that we gathered in the sweet spring, and now gaze on the cold winding-sheet of winter in which all is laid, we sorrow, and it is human nature to sorrow; Jesus wept, and tears have been consecrated ever since. There is a sorrow too that springs from the recollection of our unkindness.

How often have you had this feeling with regard to some one who has been taken away from you: "Oh, if we could only recall those rough words, those uncharitable suspicions, those hasty recriminations; if we could only expunge much that we remember, and live life over again, that we might show greater kindness, that we might speak in gentler accents, that we might indicate a nobler, and a holier, and a more sympathizing heart, we would give all the world if we could only do it!" But no answer comes from the grave, you cannot recall the past. It is natural to feel grieved that we ever spoke an unkind word where kind words only were due, or that we ever used a harsh expression where gentleness became us; but the only way to make that recollection less bitter is what was suggested by Abigail to David, namely, now so to live, and to make our intercourse so pure, so holy, so Christian, that when ties that are close shall be dissolved, and relationships that are near and dear shall be scattered like leaves before the whirlwinds of autumn, we may have little to regret except the loss of one beloved by us. This sorrow, then is a sorrow that is in itself human, and is not sinful. There is a sorrow, too, that must spring from the sense of our own bitter bereavement. It is a great loss to lose the son that is the stay of his mother; or for the child to lose the father that was his advocate, his champion, and his friend; or for the widow to lose the husband, and have none to defend her, and speak for her, and counsel her, and sympathize with her. It is human to feel sorrow here, it is neither sinful nor forbidden, only it is **not yet sanctified sorrow.**

There is that sorrow which is sweetened and sanctified. First of all, that lamentation or sorrow is sacred and Christian when looking at death and the grave we see what sin has done. That sick bed is the creation of sin, that grave was dug not in Paradise, but long after Adam left it; that pale face on which death has breathed as he swept past on his visits from house to house, reflects sin that

entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death has passed upon all men. And when we look at death, and see in its reflected light sin and sorrow, the sight of the dead is so far sanctified, for it leads us more to hate the sin that is the source of such bitter bereavements, and to long and yearn for that day when One shall come who shall banish all sin from his world, make all things new, and restore a Paradise at the end brighter, and more beautiful than that with which time commenced. Sorrow is sanctified and Christian when it draws its consolation not from the opera, nor from the playhouse, nor from cards, nor from wine, nor from frivolous and dissipated company; but when it draws it from the spring, the inexhaustible spring of comfort, God's holy Word. A person under really deep affliction is disgusted by the common comfort that the world offers. But we rarely find anyone under the deepest and most poignant sorrow who does not feel that there is a leaf in this tree of life that seems to give healing to the wounded heart, and that there are streams of refreshment here that are more than compensatory for all the loss; and that makes him lift up his heart to God, and bless Him that, when all nature's cisterns were broken, and all its waters evaporated, God has opened a fountain of living water in the desert of which we may drink, and the mourner be satisfied, receiving beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning. Sorrow for the dead is sanctified when it lifts our hearts on its stream to a higher and a better land, and enables us to feel what death, I believe, is meant impressively to teach, that every one that we lose is one tie less to attach us to this world, and one tie more to attract us upward to that better and brighter world. And if it be true that just in the ratio in which our children, and our fathers, and our mothers, and our brothers, and our sisters die, this world becomes more and more the foreign land, and heaven becomes more and more our home, then must the affections, if rightly inspired, enlightened, and sanctified, be lifted up from this strange land, where there is scarcely



Mary Presented to the People.

a fold left, and fastened upon that brighter and better land where our own dear tongue is spoken, where our own dear friends are in happy groups, and where we come unto the spirits of just men made perfect, and unto Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the new Jerusalem, the city of the living God; then, indeed, is sorrow sweetened and sanctified.

Sorrow is spiritual and holy when we resolve under its feeling to be more devoted to God, more active in duty, more laborious in sacrifice, more useful in our day; so that in the world we shall neither be a blank nor a blot, but a gigantic and wide-spread blessing. If the death of those we loved awakens in our hearts this firm determination, then that loss was from God, for it takes us to God; that loss was a blessing in disguise, for it has been sanctified to our good, and to the good of others. There is a sorrow that we feel for the loss of those that we love when a country thus loses a patriot, the Church of Christ a living member and an ornament, and the world one that made it better during the little time he was in it for his passage through it. Sorrow is sweetened and sanctified to us when it makes us look forward, more anxiously and more earnestly to that blessed day when "them that sleep in Christ will He bring with Him, and we that are alive shall not precede them that are dead in Christ; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead in Christ shall be raised first; then we which are alive and remain shall be changed, and caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be for ever with the Lord." And what a glorious prospect! Graves that now scar the earth as with wounds will all be abolished; death will be cast into hell; the desert shall rejoice, earth's solitary places shall blossom like the rose; and in living, and holy, and regenerated bodies, with living, holy, and happy souls, we shall see creation in

more than its first blush, and all things in more than their first beauty, and we shall wonder that we ever clung to this wrecked and miserable world, and failed to put our hearts and our hopes forward to that beautiful scene where the new Jerusalem cometh down from heaven adorned like a bride for the bridegroom, and there shall be no more sorrow, nor crying, nor tears, but all old things shall have passed away, and all things shall have become new. And our sorrow is sweetened and sanctified when we feel that as those of Christ's people that remain become fewer those of Christ's people that are with Him are multiplying; and that the time is near, and comes nearer every day, when heaven and earth shall melt into one; and the joy at meeting those long severed, but not lost, only gone before, shall more than compensate for all the griefs, and aches, and sorrows which we felt.

And when old age comes, one can then scarcely grieve at the departure of an aged man whose heart loves the Lord, and whose soul as it leaves its worn-out tenement enters into the presence of God and of the Lamb. Have you ever seen a ship coming in to her harbour after a long voyage, with all sails set? It has traversed a thousand miles, with the sun for its light, with the sea for its path, and the winds for its speed; what might have been its grave has been its pathway, and the winds that might have wrecked it have only wafted it to its shore. It has travelled by day and by night, by reefs and by quicksands, in storm and in calm; not a timber is started, not a shred of the canvas is torn, and it glides beautifully into the harbour, as if it were an answer to the prayers of waiting parents, and waiting wives, and waiting children; beautiful in itself, and big with blessings to those that wait and long for its arrival. But more beautiful by far is that Christian old man who set sail last century upon the ocean, the troubled ocean of life; who has reached the middle of the century that now is; and guided by sunshine, and delivered from reefs, and shoals, and quicksands, at last reaches that

peaceful haven around which shall crowd faces once familiar, and be heard voices once musical, saying, "Let us rejoice, for our long lost is now found, it is meet that we should make merry." And thus there will be joy in heaven ever as one enters; and the sorrows that we felt for separations upon earth shall merge into joys that shall never be suspended.



The Designation of David.



AVID was the youngest son of Jesse. His name is as frequent, at least, in the sacred Scriptures as that of Abraham. His history is full of lights and shadows—of excellences and defects. He was born at Bethlehem. Samuel at Bethlehem sought to anoint one of the family of Jesse, and at first was disposed to accept Eliab. But height of stature was not by any means a royal claim. David, however, was divinely indicated, and was taken “from the sheepfolds, from following the ewes great with young,” to feed Israel. We are influenced by material and gaudy things; God judges otherwise.

David was a poet, not only “born,” but “born again.” He was also a musician; the tones of his harp laid the evil spirit in Saul, and the words of his poetry have cheered, and encouraged, and elevated the heart of Christendom for eighteen hundred years.

His victory over the Philistine giant gave early proof of military talent.

Part of his life was spent at the court of Saul, part at that of Achish, part as an outlaw at Adullam, and in the heart of its fastnesses.

Finally, he was anointed king in Hebron. He founded Jerusalem, “the city of David.”

His prosperous reign was not exempt from many calamities. Plague, rebellion, treachery—endured and overcome—cast deep shadows on his history. He died at the age of seventy, and was buried in Jerusalem, “and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.”



David and Goliath.



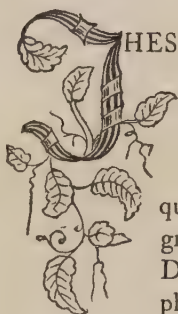
SOON it appears there was war between Israel and the Philistines, between whom there could be no coalition. While the two armies were advancing to battle, a great champion from Gath, Goliath by name, stepped forward from the ranks of the Philistines, and challenged any one Israelite, the bravest and best, to a duel, the result of which should decide the issues of the war. David, though young and recently anointed, despising the remonstrances and objections of Eliab and others, volunteered to accept the challenge. Saul hesitated to allow a stripling to risk his life, but at last, giving a reluctant consent, he offered David his own armour as a protection. David, however, refused, courteously but firmly, the armour of Saul, and took with him only his pastoral staff, and five smooth stones from the brook, with his sling. The Philistine received David with contemptuous reproaches, disdainful of such an adversary. But David replied in words quiet and humble, and yet full of confidence, "Thou comest to me with a sword, a spear, and a shield, but I come to thee, not trusting in might, or in power, but in the name of the Lord of hosts, by whom I shall conquer thee; for the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's." David sent forthwith a pebble into the brow of the giant, and he fell prostrate; and with Goliath's own

sword he cut off the giant's head, and brought the trophy to Saul—a testimony to the propriety of his decision and the divinity of his mission.

This victory decided the issues of the war. It was not courted by David, nor was the combat suggested on the side of Israel. The gigantic Philistine, cased in armour, and physically strong, threw down his challenge at the feet of the army of Israel, with taunts and defiance. David accepted the challenge, with the somewhat hesitating consent of Saul, strong in the conviction that his cause was right and his protection God. The stripling son of Jesse felt the victory was not “by might or power,” but by his help who is the shield of his people and the Saviour of all that put their trust in Him. Apart from this consideration, moral courage has a force of which mere physical courage is destitute. When we are persuaded, on the clearest and most cogent reasons, that right is on our side, we need not hesitate to accept the most defiant challenge; for right is might in battle, and victory also in the long run. God is not, as Napoleon said, with the strongest battalions, but with the just and righteous cause. Goliath found it so, and Napoleon discovered it, when too late to repair the wrongs he inflicted, or to recall the errors he fell into.



David and Jonathan.



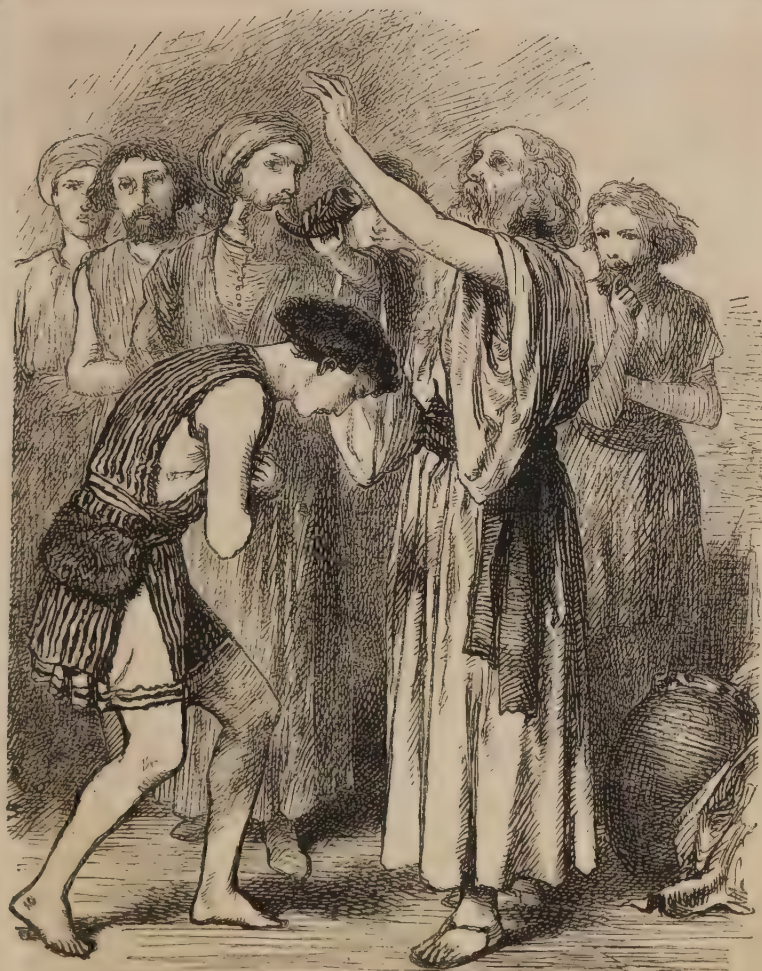
THESE two royal youths were nearly of an age ; David's many accomplishments had created admiration in the susceptible heart of Jonathan. They made a compact, which Jonathan ratified by conferring on David his robe. When David returned a conqueror from the wars of the Philistines, the women, grateful for victory, and charmed with the exploits of David, came from their homes and formed a triumphal procession, in order to express thus publicly their appreciation of the hero of the day. Saul ought to have rejoiced that he had a subject and a soldier worthy of such recognition. But instead the envious and evil heart of the monarch was roused into jealousy. David, seeing and regretting the evil spirit that had taken possession of the king, seized his harp and threw forth from its sounding strings some beautiful strains, fitted to subdue and calm his tormented heart. Saul, like a savage, aimed a javelin at the head of the young minstrel, but missed his mark. He then banished David from his court. Saul afterwards promised his daughter in marriage to David—not from love to David—but soon recalled his promise. Saul, it is evident, had made up his mind to seize every opportunity of killing David. Jonathan's affection, however, saved David. He went to his father, remonstrated with him on his conduct, and displayed the brilliant services which the son of Jesse had rendered to his crown. Pacified for a day by this

interview, Saul's wrath returned in greater force, and he sought again to put David to death. Jonathan arranged with David that he should absent himself from the king's table, and wait in concealment to hear from Jonathan what should be said on the occasion. Saul, seeing David's place empty, inquired for the son of Jesse; Jonathan stated in reply that with his consent David had gone to spend the day with his family at Bethlehem. Saul, exasperated at the loss of a chance of killing David, launched a javelin at Jonathan; Jonathan escaped, and sent signals to David that all at home was danger, while he personally hastened to David and dismissed him in peace. David was now an outlaw at Adullam, a fugitive in Engedi.

Finally, Jonathan is killed in battle, and Saul dies a suicide. The life of Saul was in harmony with so wretched an end. David cherishing the memory of Jonathan as a friend, beloved as a brother, and forgiving Saul all his unworthy conduct, gives expression to one of those exquisite elegiac hymns, which are unrivalled for beauty, pathos, and poetry. "The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. . . . Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided. . . . Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

It is beautiful to see how David passes by unmentioned the grievous crimes of Saul, the dark shadows that rest on his memory, and throws up into clearest light whatever was good, or great, or noble in his life. Death seems to us to spread a transfiguring and softening light over the departed, and to melt down, in our recollections, all that disfigured and defaced them in life.





H. C. W. S. 1840

Samuel anointing David.





J. F. SHAW & CO., PATERNOSTER ROW.

SAUL ASKING ABNER WHO DAVID IS.

LEIGHTON, BRON.

David in Adullam.



AUL was a man of fitful temper and violent passions, the victim of jealousy and envy. He saw much in David that he loved and admired, but more still that he dreaded, as a candidate for his throne, sure of success, and destined to displace him and his dynasty. This alone accounts for many of the scenes that ensued—scenes which reflect great discredit upon Saul, and in most instances bring out the excellences of David, his son-in-law. Hunted like a partridge on the mountains, a fugitive and friendless, David at last finds a retreat in a fortified place or cave, fortified by nature and art. With him David had a motley group of bandits and beggars for an army, and rather unreliable support in his counsellors. These, however, he brought under discipline, and made them coalesce in his object. Those he had to conciliate were the very off-scourings of the land—men that fled to him, not because they were patriotic, nor that they cared for his credit, nor very much for his safety; but because many of them were deeply in debt, and wanted to satisfy creditors—honestly if they could, dishonestly if they could not; and others were discontented, quarrelsome, and fretful, dissatisfied with everything in which they did not play a conspicuous part. They gathered themselves unto him, and he became—much to his own personal inconvenience, but

from sheer necessity—captain and leader over them. Of these discontented debtors and malcontents there were altogether about four hundred, and with this motley band David had to defend himself. They were neither patriots, gathered together to defend their fatherland, nor honest men, enlisting to lend their aid for pay to the cause they believed to be right; they fled to him simply because they were repelled from everybody else, and were actuated by the most mercenary and selfish motives and aims. David, as if conscious that he had very little security in such a motley and miserable group, went to Mizpeh of Moab, and told the king of Moab, I have very little in this world that I care much about, except my father and my mother. These vagabonds I have gathered together will not help me in protecting them; will you, therefore, do me the kindness to take charge of my aged parents, Jesse and my mother, until I know what God in his providence will do for me? And the king of Moab undertook the charge of them.

The prophet Gad advised David not to abide any longer in Adullam. Saul, having heard of David's retreat, and of the men that were with him, addressed his servants: "Hear now, ye Benjamites;" and appealing purely to what is mercenary in their hearts, he continues, "Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, that all of you have conspired against me?" He supposed, having a mercenary soul himself, that nobody could be actuated by anything but mercenary motives. Mercenary persons impute to others mean and mercenary ends. Saul substantially said to them, "Do you think you will get better vineyards, better wines, better food, better raiment, from this restless fellow David than from me? I ask you to look to your own interests, make them the chief thing, and consider well the main chance, and then decide accordingly." Doeg the Edomite, set over the servants of Saul, was a vile person. His whole heart was bent upon his own personal aggran-

dizement, and he was ready to lie, or deceive, or malign, or curse, or praise, as was most likely to promote his own selfish ends. Doeg became a tale-bearer, and very needlessly said, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub"—that is, the high priest ;—"and he inquired of the Lord for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine." In all this, Doeg acted as a spy. If Saul had been a right-minded man, he would have ordered Doeg to be imprisoned ; but, instead of that, it served his purpose to make use of him, and Doeg felt it served his to act as a spy ; and therefore Saul accepted the information which Doeg volunteered, and sent for the venerable high priest, and asked him, "Are these things so ?" Ahimelech the high priest replied in language so transparent, so ingenious, so palpably true, that his innocence would have been established and vindicated in the estimate of any sensible or charitable man. He said, "I never could have meant to enter into any conspiracy against your majesty's throne ; for David is your son-in-law, he married your daughter ; and when he came to me, a fugitive and in want, and alleging that he had a message from the king, I gave him food—that is perfectly true ; and as he had no sword to defend himself"—society then, like some outposts of society now, being beset with plunderers and thieves—"I gave him one to defend himself ; and in all this I acted, I believed and felt, as a loyal subject, and a dutiful servant of the crown, and never dreamed of doing anything that could give offence to you, or be misconstrued." Saul, instead of accepting this explanation, ordered his servants, called here footmen, that is, his infantry, to put the priests to death. These noble-minded men saw this was a command unlawful in the sight of God—unmistakably so ; and they refused to execute it, thus obeying God ; and having refused to obey man, they were ready to take the consequences. Doeg was a handy and pliant personage, ready for any wickedness, and disposed to flinch from no crime that would subserve his selfish

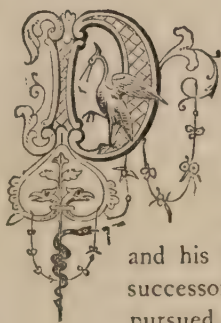
ends. Doeg the Edomite, therefore, steps in and says, "I am at your service; and with my friends and assistants I am ready to clear away all these rubbish of priests, who have turned traitors, and conspired against your majesty." The priests were all slain with the edge of the sword; and not satisfied with that, he put to death infants, and women, and children, and oxen, and asses, with the edge of the sword, and destroyed the whole city of Nob.

Abiathar showed all to David. David, with a deeply sensitive heart, though conscious of perfect innocence in the matter, felt that he had been the occasion, if not the cause, of all the slaughter, and wept, and sorrowed, and grieved in the sight of God.

How truly we learn, from history as well as from inspiration, that from Saul who occupied the throne down to Doeg the Edomite, the mercenary and subservient minister of his vile passions, the heart of man is by nature deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Human historians, in their pages, depict outward facts and visible events, tracing as they may be able with the intuition of genius the links that knit them together; but the historians of God's Word, inspired by his spirit, and seeing things in a higher and purer light, not only depict outward phenomena, events, and facts, but also lay bare the motives and springs in which they originate, and show what man is capable of, if it were not for the grace of Almighty God.



David at Engedi.



DAVID, a fugitive from the persecuting fury of Saul, reached at last the wilderness of Engedi, situated on the western edge of the Dead Sea, a mountainous district, abounding with caverns of great depth, size, and extent. Saul, hearing that David had fled to Engedi, and determined, at whatever cost, to extirpate him and his from the earth, that there might be found no successor to the throne in the shepherd son of Jesse, pursued him with three thousand men amid rocks trodden only by the wild goats, slippery and precipitous. At length he arrived on level ground, where there was a cave. In eastern countries, caves in the rocks and hills are had recourse to by travellers for the purpose of sheltering them from the scorching heat of the sun at noonday, and where, covering up their feet with their cloak or plaid, they lie down and repose in a cool and delicious atmosphere. Saul, wearied probably by the chase, entered, covered up his feet, and fell asleep. David—by a singular chance, the world would call it, by an arrangement providential and determined, we know well—went into the same cave. The instant that the men of David saw Saul asleep, they said to David, “This is the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand.” David perhaps was at first tempted to kill

one who had done him so much wrong, and for whom, and his crown and throne, he had suffered so much evil. He rose, however, and only cut off the skirt of the large outer robe of the sleeping monarch, while his sleep was not disturbed, and kept the skirt as a trophy. Having done this, he felt at first, in his sensitive conscience, as if he had acted wrong; he thought within himself, "Whatever be the conduct of the man, he is the king; and if I am dissatisfied with him, the individual, as I have just cause to be, that is not to make me rise up against the ordinance of God, and injure him who, with all his personal faults, is the King of Israel, and its legitimate and proper ruler." Therefore his heart smote him, because he had used the freedom of cutting off a portion of Saul's robe. Perhaps he did it at first without any ulterior design; but we shall see in the sequel of the story that this seeming accident was the evidence to Saul how much he was in the power of David, and thereby a demonstration he could not resist that he had to deal, not with a venomous opponent, but with a loving, loyal, and Christian young man, who, in spite of his wrongs, wished well to Saul, and prosperity to his kingdom, and who therefore would not, even when the monarch was in his power, gratify the passion of revenge by putting to death one who well deserved to die. David left the cave, and cried after Saul in language that became a subject addressing his king, "My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself. And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt"—that is, the words of bad counsellors and ministers around the throne, seeking selfish and nefarious ends, who have tried to indoctrinate the heart of the king with the untrue notion, that David was his enemy, and anxious to destroy him. "Now," said David, "if I be your enemy, I had you in my power; why did I spare you? Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord had delivered thee to-day into mine hand in the cave, and some

bade me kill thee, but mine eye spared thee, and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed." And then he appealed to the fragment of his robe which he had cut off, to show how surely Saul might have been his victim, and how true was his own assertion, that he had no private, party, or revengeful feeling towards one from whom, however, he had received nothing but evil. David added, "Now that I have shown you I have no hostile feelings towards you as my sovereign, what can tempt you to pursue and persecute me? After whom is the King of Israel come out? After whom dost thou pursue? After a dead dog? One who is really not worth the expenditure of so much trouble, or the excitement of your heart by so much fury."

When David had thus shown what he really felt, and proved what he felt by very sensible and irresistible evidence, Saul showed that, with all his cruelty, there lay in the quiet depths of his heart much of tender and human sensibility, and that he could appreciate disinterested sacrifice and goodness. "Saul then lifted up his voice and wept;" and he said to David—what was really David's noblest triumph, a far more splendid triumph than if he had killed the king and seated himself upon his throne—"Thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." The way to exasperate enmity is to retaliate blow for blow, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. But if it were not your better nature, but a mere course of policy that would redound to the greatest good, your best course would be to reward evil with good, to overcome hatred with loving-kindness, and to let men feel how mean is revenge, how magnificent is the retaliation of loving-kindness. And therefore Saul argues, "If a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? Wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king." Strange event! He who pursued David to destroy him is now

prostrate, a suppliant at his feet, and begs of him with prophetic impulse, when he shall be king, to deal tenderly with him and his. David, with all the candour by which he was characterized, sware to him accordingly.

Precedents so beautiful, so expedient, so holy, cannot be too carefully stored in the memory, too ardently exhibited in the life; and were the whole of mankind to treat one another as David treated Saul, we should begin to breathe the air and bask in the sunshine of a millennial day, and earth would begin to melt away into the glory and the blessedness of heaven. God delivered Saul into David's hand, and gave him an opportunity to exercise faith and patience. He had a promise of the kingdom, but no command to slay the king. He reasons strongly, both with himself and with his men, against doing Saul any hurt. He not only would not do this bad thing himself, but he would not suffer those about him to do it. Thus he rendered good for evil to him from whom he received evil for good, and became herein an example to us all.



David and Nabal.

NABAL was a silly, foolish person. If that had been all, it might have been his misfortune ; for a person is not responsible for having little intellect, or poor judgment, or a weak imagination, because such are given him of God, and for these, therefore, he is not responsible ; but Nabal was to be blamed, for he was also churlish, coarse, fretful, and of a bad temper. He was of the house of Caleb, a man that followed the Lord fully. He had the misfortune to inherit a noble name, and to disgrace that name by a churlish, obstinate, and perverse temper. Far better have a good temper and a pious heart, and no ancestral lineage to refer to, than the noblest ancestry, but along with it the distinction to disgrace it by inconsistent conduct.

Nabal had married a woman whose first and noblest feature was that she had "a good understanding," and that is strikingly shown in her dialogue with David ; and, secondly, that "she was a woman of a beautiful countenance ;" and it was a great misfortune that so good and beautiful a woman should be married to so churlish and ill-tempered a husband.

David, now in the wilderness, a refugee from Saul, who still hunted him like a partridge on the mountains, along with the handful of men with whom he had fled, and being reduced to great straits,

sent out ten young men to this Nabal, instructing them to address him in the most courteous, Christian, and becoming terms. "Greet him in my name"—that is, present my compliments to him—"and thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast." Nothing was more calculated to subdue the ill-temper of Nabal, and to make an opening for the very reasonable request that David was about to make. He bade the young men tell Nabal, "We have protected your shepherds when they were exposed to peril; and though we may have lived like wandering Arabs, and I, like the emir of the desert, dependent on plunder, yet we have protected your shepherds, and taken nothing from them by stealth or by force. Ask your own young men, and they will be witnesses in our favour. And therefore I beg of you now that you will look to these young men; and as we are poor, and hungry, and destitute, we ask not for luxuries, nor for things that you could with difficulty spare, but for sheep, or oxen, or bread—the very first thing that cometh to your hands; give it unto thy servants, and to thy son David." It is the language of affection and respect.

When they had made this reasonable request, couched in the most courteous terms, Nabal, one would have thought would have said, if he had not anything to spare, that he was extremely sorry it was not in his power, and would have returned the courtesy with which they had approached him. But this sulky, ill-tempered man, instead of doing so, breaks forth into the most abusive language: "Who is this David?"—just as if he did not know perfectly well—"and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master, and I dare say he is some runaway servant, who has lost his place by his misconduct, his dishonesty, and bad temper; and as he would not work for his bread, no doubt he has come to me in order to live in indolence, in ease, and at other people's expense." There was not the least ground for such



David sparing Saul.

surmises ; it was his own vile imagination and horrid temper that suggested this most uncharitable construction. And then he exclaimed, being a genuine monopolist, " Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be ? " What a thorough specimen of a perfect vortex, absorbing everything ! " Everything is mine ; " and yet it was not ; he was but a trustee for God, responsible to God for his use or abuse of it ; and instead of hugging it closer to himself, as if that would save it, he ought rather to have dispersed, to have given to the poor, and to have tasted a blessing that would have sweetened his sour temper. " There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ; and they that water others shall themselves be watered. "

David, finding his young men sent back without a single morsel of bread, showed that he had some temper too, and did what he was not called upon to do ; he ordered his men to gird on their swords, to make ready, and take by force what this man would not give by courtesy. Hospitality was then a duty ; it is so now. To refuse hospitality was then a crime ; and for David to go to this wealthy, ill-tempered monopolist, who had refused bread to those that were perishing of hunger, and to take it by force, in such and so unsettled a state of society. and also under such circumstances and such *régime* as was that of Israel, was perhaps only what was his due.

But there happened to be in this churlish man's service a very good servant, who loved the man in spite of his vile temper, and loved his mistress also. He therefore went to her in confidence, and told her the fact—that Nabal had acted in a very wrong way, that David was excessively angry, that he was coming to avenge himself, and that he would sweep the place clear of all its inhabitants—take everything that Nabal called his own, unless some attempt were made to propitiate him, and to satisfy his reasonable demands. Abigail

forthwith went out with an immense quantity of provision, with clusters of raisins, cakes of figs, parched corn, sheep, and wine, and loaves ; and when she met David, she fell on her face, and said, in most beautiful and touching language, "Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be. Let me suffer, let me be punished, for what has been done. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial." That was rather a strong expression for a wife to use of her husband ; but no doubt his conduct justified it, and in David's judgment certainly it was not over the truth. And she said, with great good sense, "Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. . . . I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid : for the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house"—knowing that David was to be king in Israel. "Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul ; but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life." Here follows a beautiful expression, a precious truth. "And it shall come to pass, when you shall have ascended to the throne that shall ever be known by the name of the throne of David, and shall wear the royal purple, and shall sway a sceptre without a precedent for its greatness, and without a parallel for its glory, that at that day, if you will only spare my poor foolish husband and them that are his, you will have no lurking regret in your memory that you have shed blood, nor that my lord hath avenged himself." The argument is most admirable. We should never do a deed, the recollection of which will be painful ; it is a reason for abstinence, not only from crime, but from what, lawful in itself, must be painful in our recollections. David at once accepted it. "Blessed," he said, "be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me." The eloquence of her speech, the impressiveness of her appearance, the

candour with which she spoke, the just arguments which she used, show that a woman may be, as she has often proved herself, possessed of intellect superior to that of man; and that the notion that woman is intellectually an inferior being is altogether a misinterpretation.

David's wrath was overcome, and he promised that nothing should be done to hurt her or Nabal.

Abigail came to Nabal, and found him adding to his folly, his brutality, and cross temper, the low and disgusting vice of drunkenness. "He was very drunken, wherefore she told him nothing, less or more." Here again her good sense breaks out. Speak to a drunken man, and you will meet with retaliations of bad usage; and hence, with great good sense and forethought, she waited till the alcohol had evaporated, and its effects had ceased; and when she told Nabal, his nerves unstrung by drunkenness, his health impaired by his horrid temper, and unable to stand the shock, "his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. And it came to pass about ten days after, that the Lord smote Nabal, that he died."

When David heard that Nabal was dead, he blessed the Lord, who had pleaded the cause of his reproach; and "David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife." This was not immediately on the death of Nabal; there is evidence that a long interval elapsed. She felt that, to be the wife of a royal personage—for such he was in destiny, if not yet in fact—was more than she deserved, a dignity she had no title to; but, nevertheless, as David's first wife was lost or divorced, he took her, and she became his wife. But at the same time it is just to add—what was a stain upon all the illustrious characters of Old Testament Scripture—he had more wives than one. Polygamy was suffered, we are told, by reason of the hardness of their hearts; wherefore on this account it is difficult to say; but this we are sure of, it was contrary to the law enacted in Paradise—contrary to that law as enforced and

explained by our blessed Lord ; and whoever was guilty of it, it was sin in the sight of God.

We do not expect to find in this history of the human heart, in all its phases, a single perfect character ; all were flawed, and needed forgiveness. One only, in magnificent contrast, was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners—that we may see how much there is in each of us that needs to be forgiven, how much there was in Christ worthy of the imitation of all mankind.



Death of Saul.



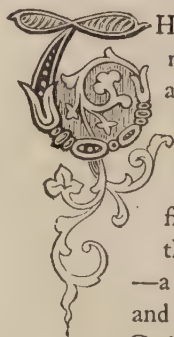
SAUL at length meets that end which was worthy, if I may use the expression, of such a ruler. His early days were full of promise; he seemed to be the anointed of the Lord, and within to be as pure, holy, and spiritual as in size he excelled the rest of his countrymen. By and by, however, one evil passion gets access to his spirit, the most groveling and debasing passion that can possibly occupy the human heart—namely, envy: mean and foolish in itself, and often most disastrous in its issues. For what is envy? Not a determination, worthy of man, to rise to the height of another's excellence; but dissatisfaction with others because they are more successful, and a desire to pull down the successful rival to its own low level. He saw in David excellences and virtues which he did not care to imitate, and therefore he envied David his excellence, his prosperity, his progress. The result was, his heart became so diseased, his spirit so troubled, that all the splendours of a palace could not lighten its gloom, and all the dignities of a throne could not comfort him, as long as David prospered, and was blessed of God, and praised by his countrymen. David, pitying rather than censuring Saul, approaches him as a physician, and with the sweet sounds of his harp, lays, only for a season—for that was all the influence they could exert—the troubled spirit of the infatuated

monarch. But, alas! the monarch repays David's kindness with successive but unsuccessful attempts to take his life. Saul soon begins to taste the bitterness of his own course by being cast off of God, and refused an answer when he consulted the usual oracles and means of information. In this state of disappointment, he had recourse to the very thing which he himself had at one time most justly condemned—witchcraft; he consulted an infamous and a superstitious woman, who pretended to exercise control over spirits above, or engaged to evoke them from the vasty deep, and so to find through these sources solutions of difficulties which he could not arrive at through the teaching and the instruction of God. At last, we find the degraded monarch in a worse position than the King Lear of the great dramatic poet—cast forth from happiness and peace with God, into the bleak desert of exile and estrangement from all joyous and blessed things. Meanwhile, worse than the winds of heaven, and the storm, and rain, and snow, his own fierce passions, and impetuous depravities and propensities buffeted him hither and thither, till his career of disappointment is closed by his enemies overcoming him, and with him all the hosts of Israel; while he who lived a depraved and a wilful sinner dies a miserable and unhappy suicide.

So ends the biography of Saul. With his armour-bearer and his three sons, he lies slain upon the Mount Gilboa; and among those three sons was one really superior to the rest—Jonathan. It would not have been sufficient chastisement to Saul if he had seen Jonathan spared. He lived long enough to see his sons slain, the banners of his country trampled in the dust, the uncircumcised rejoicing over the ruin. After he fell by his own hand, his head was cut off, his armour was placed in the house of the heathen god, and he himself buried with the burial of the poorest and worst of the Philistines—unhonoured in life, and scarcely lamented in death. He had learned in life that the ways of the transgressor are hard.

David's lament over Saul and Jonathan is replete with pathos : "The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places : how are the mighty fallen !" He apostrophizes in eloquent terms the high places of the field, the mountains of Gilboa, and pronounces a curse upon them : "Let there be no dew nor rain upon you, because you have been the scene of so disastrous a slaughter, so terrible and destructive a reverse." He speaks of Saul and Jonathan as "lovely and pleasant in their lives." How true is it that death seems to extinguish painful personal reminiscences ! When we accompany to the grave the dead dust of one with whom we may often have quarrelled in life, how disposed is memory, how willing is the heart to throw into the shadow great defects, and to bring into brilliant and prominent relief all remembered excellences and long-hidden or denied beauties of character ! It is well it should be so. David forgets all the bitterness of Saul, all the persecutions he encountered from him, and remembers and magnifies his excellence, and joins him with one who was his greatest and his warmest friend—speaks of them as not divided in death, as pleasant in their lives, as characterized by great speed, and strength, and prowess. Turning round to those who would weep most bitterly—for it is woman's eyes that weep most tenderly and truly over the memory of the fallen brave—he says, "Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel." How touching are the words, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan ; very pleasant hast thou been unto me ; thy love to me exceeded that love which is deepest and most enduring. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished !"

The Anointed King.



THE various tribes of Israel assembled at Hebron by representatives selected from each, for the performance of one of those great national acts which so greatly affected the moral and material prosperity of the land—the anointing of the Son of Jesse as their king. David had all the gifts and qualifications requisite for one called to the sovereignty of the realm. He was a pure Israelite—a brave soldier—a true believer in the distinctive truths of revelation, and declared from heaven, by a special manifestation of God's will through Samuel, to be the destined king.

The person was therefore clearly indicated. His election and consecration were accordingly the obvious duty of Israel. He was anything but perfect as a man or a ruler. But the dominant desire of his heart was to rule in the fear of God for the good of his people, and for the promotion of those sublime religious and moral truths which lie at the roots of national prosperity. The anointing was represented with great solemnity in order to impress the sacredness and obligation of the new relation on the hearts of the people, and to surround David with every impressive circumstance.

The outlines of a constitutional monarchy are clearly traceable in the consecration of the King of Israel. "Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the King to Hebron, and David made a covenant

with them in Hebron before the Lord." This "covenant" no doubt contained the duties David owed to his people, as well as the loyalty and obedience they owed to him. The observance of the compact is the safety of ruler and people. Any dereliction on either side is the introduction of an element of weakness, and when this element comes from the throne it is more destructive in its action than when it begins among the subjects. The relation of sovereign and people is essentially a divine one. Its deepest and most lasting sanctions are in the Word of God. "By Him kings reign and princes decree justice," and it is God who attaches the affections of a people to the sovereign He has placed over them. Prayer for all in authority becomes the people, and comes back to them in "quiet and peaceable lives." "Fear God and honour the King," are sister duties—twins that cannot be separated without injury to both.



David's First Act as a Sovereign.

URING the reign of the predecessor of David, the ark had been exposed to criminal neglect. The visible symbol of the presence and glory of God had lain in an obscure place, removed far from the homage that was its due. David's heart, warm with adoring gratitude, arising from his review of the goodness and mercy that had followed him; and deeply alive to his responsibilities as a Christian king, prompted him to bring up the ark out of its obscurity into the metropolis of his country, in order that, placed in the sight of all, it might be enshrined anew in the affections, and accompanied by the admiring worship, of a great people, favoured above all the nations of the earth.

Noble preparations were made for the solemnity; a royal edict was addressed to priests and Levites, and all that were concerned. Priests, and Levites, and singers accordingly assembled in crowds, each prepared to fulfil the duties of his office; and from the king on the throne, down to the meanest officer in the tabernacle, they joined in celebrating the glory and praises of Him in psalms and divine hymns, and with all the varied rites of the ancient ritual.

The lesson taught by this initial act of David, on accepting the reins of empire, is a very precious and important one. Religion is the first concern, and it ought to be the earliest care of kings.



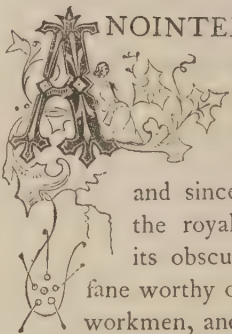
David and Jonathan.

That reign is not inaugurated in vain which "seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." "Godliness" in kings, as well as in merchants, soldiers, and servants, "has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come." What begins in prayer ends in praise.

Another important lesson is suggested here. A king is not merely the ruler of temporal interests, but the guardian also of spiritual and everlasting concerns. It is his duty to take charge of and bear the ark of the Lord, as well as the exchequer of the people—to do nothing to depress, but everything to enhance, the claims and practice of true religion. The zeal and earnestness with which he regards religious and moral interests will not impair the integrity and faithfulness with which he discharges material obligations.



David's Desire Refused.

POINTED to be sovereign of a people who were set apart to be a nation of kings and priests, David desired to complete his attention to religious duties, by building a temple in Jerusalem worthy of God. It was a noble design, and sincerely and passionately cherished in the heart of the royal worshipper. Having rescued the ark from its obscurity and depression, he felt that it required a fane worthy of it. He, therefore, gathered together stranger workmen, and set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God. He prepared iron in abundance for the nails, the doors, and gates, and joinings; and brass, also, in abundance, and cedar-trees. But he had learned from God that with all his personal fitness, he could not be honoured with seeing the accomplishment of that grand enterprise on which he had set his heart. God said to him, "Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars, thou shalt not build a house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight." These words must have fallen as lead upon the heart of David. He looked forward to the building of a magnificent temple in Jerusalem as to the crowning act of his reign, a temple "exceeding magnificent, of fame, and of glory throughout all countries," and to find himself cast aside as unworthy of the work, must have been a very bitter thing to the son of

Jesse. But God stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind. He gave to David a consolatory if not a compensatory promise. "Behold, a son shall be born of thee who shall be a man of rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about, for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build a house for my name." David meekly and submissively received the message of God, believing it was in mercy, and faithfulness, and love, and addressed Solomon in these words, "Now, my son, the Lord will be with thee, and prosper thou, and build the house of the Lord thy God, as He hath said of thee." David, also, with no feeling of discontentment with the wise arrangement of God, magnanimously accepted the situation, and not only enlisted in the service of his son all the resources and materials he had collected, but ordered "all the princes of Israel to help Solomon, his son, saying to them, Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God, arise, therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord and the holy vessels of God into the house that is to be built to the name of the Lord."

If God refuses to us the honour we have passionately desired, we should not envy those on whom God is pleased to bestow it. Not only so but we should lend a helping hand to a work intrinsically good, in which we may not be suffered to take a conspicuous or governing part.

God often gives blessings to our children withheld from ourselves. In our possession, they would have failed, and were, therefore, wisely withheld. In the care and trust of our children, they will prosper and multiply. God reigns, and divides the blessings He bestows in wisdom and love. We should rejoice to see the good done, and be thankful that any are honoured to accomplish it. David's whole tone of mind and bearing in this matter was perfectly beautiful. David urged the nobles and the people to give liberally toward

the sacred enterprise, and they gave with no stinted measure, gold and brass, and precious stones, and the people rejoiced, for they offered willingly and with a perfect heart, and David rejoiced as if he had been chosen for the work, and said, "Blessed be Thou, Lord God of Israel our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty, for all that is in the heaven and the earth, is thine, thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as Head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all. Now, therefore, our God, we thank Thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things came of Thee, and of thine own have we given Thee."



David's Great Sin.



AFTER many scenes, and conflicts, and incidents, in most of which the character of David shone forth with augmented lustre, though not without intervening shadows, we come to one event in his life with which it has been not more disparagingly than justly associated in the word of God. It was only the living root of true religion, ever strong, that was in David's heart which saved him from fatal and final ruin.

It is the first dark cloud that settles on the history of David. He that permitted the sin in his providence orders its faithful and permanent record. A national Jewish writer would have left out the history of this dark stain; but God's Word gives no profile view of human nature: it sets forth man as he is, and facts as they occurred.

David's mind and hands were, on this occasion, unoccupied. He was not really at his post of duty and therefore he was in danger.

He saw a woman of surpassing beauty bathing. He made no covenant with his eyes. He gazed, was tempted, and fell. The greatest sin has for its origin, an incidental look, a light word, a rash deed. If these had been avoided, the ultimate iniquity had not been perpetrated. It is at the beginning of a diverging course that decision

is duty and becomes success. Temptation generated impure and ardent passion ; and passion, especially this strong sensual passion, armed with power, took absolute possession of the whole heart of the king, and set it on fire. To conceal the effects of his sin, as well as to keep it secret, he had recourse to desperate and terribly depraved criminality. Every sin requires for its concealment the perpetration of many more. He plots and brings about, by the instigation of Satan, the death of the husband of Bathsheba, the brave, the loyal, and honourable Uriah. Bathsheba, a widow, finally becomes David's wife by his marrying her. He had several wives, according to the corrupt polygamy tolerated by reason of the hardness of their hearts, but now done away in the New Testament. But this practice did not then, as it does not in Mohammedan countries now, prevent foul crimes. Watch against the beginning of sin. It may be crushed in the bud—it is invincible if dallied with and entertained. Read and ponder Proverbs, chap. vii. Pray "Lead us not into temptation." Remember the words, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." God sees always and everywhere, thoughts as well as deeds. May we ever feel "Thou, God, seest me." No sin so darkens the mind, deadens the sensibilities, and predisposes to cruelty and crime, as the criminal indulgence of sensual passions. "Flee youthful lusts, which war against the soul." "Almighty God, to whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy holy Spirit." How horrible a sin is drunkenness ! it is only more horrible to promote and encourage it. David made Uriah drink to excess, in order to make him more easily the victim of his wicked and murderous designs. Let none, however, quote the sin of David as a precedent. It is, if rightly read, a solemn warning ; and he who pleads it as an encouragement to sin tries to extract poison out of the Word of God,

Nathan Rebukes David.

NATHAN wakens up the sleeping conscience of the royal sinner by a beautiful parable. "There were two men in one city ; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds : but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up : and it grew up together with him, and with his children ; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him ; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die : and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

David heard the story, and pronounced judgment, but did not see his own face in the mirror till the prophet gave utterance to the crushing words, "Thou art the man !" The king of Israel understood, and felt poor, and wretched, and undone. The words pierced his heart, and aroused his conscience, and his soul sank within him as the prophet enumerated his crimes in succession, and proclaimed

the anger of God, and predicted the judgments that would cleave to David's house. His punishment would evermore suggest his crime. God absolves David from the eternal guilt of his sin on his confession of it to Him, but allows the public effects of a great public crime to track David's steps to the grave. A great criminal may be truly penitent, but his crime drives him from society, and degrades him through life, and hangs on him like a cloud all the rest of his days. Public sins in public men are openly visited. It is necessary that it should be so. David's infant dies, in spite of his prayers, and entreaties, and cries. David, gazing on the babe's pale face, says what is so just and true, "I shall go to him." All infants dying in infancy go to heaven. Here, too, is David's expectation of and belief in a future life, and the immortality of the soul. Let us never quote David's sin as a precedent. It is a beacon, a buoy on the reef, a warning to him that standeth to take heed lest he fall. David's grief is embodied in Psalm li., and is evidently that godly sorrow which worketh repentance, not to be repented of. The afflictions which that sin brought down were to him chastisements. There is much in the holiest to humble and abase. There is indeed forgiveness with God, that He may be feared. As Psalm li. was the litany David lifted up on this occasion, let us turn to it for instruction. It is full of pathos, and rich in spiritual truths. How exquisite is the teaching!



The Penitent's Litany.

HOW deep was the fall of the king of Israel! What a deplorable example of evil in high places! He now cries for "mercy," as the only spring from which he could draw what would do him good. He implores it after the measure of "God's loving-kindness," not after any imaginary merits or previous claim of his own. He feels he has been guilty of many transgressions—one complicated with another, and each intensified by the social position of the royal sinner. He does not cloak his sins, but "acknowledges" them with a lowly and penitent heart, bowed down in the very dust and abased. He sees in sin its greatest evil as done against God. This is the Deicidal aspect of sin. Its injury to a brother, a brother can forgive; its insurrection against God, God only can—and, blessed be his name, He does—forgive.

He traces all to its primal source—"I was shapen in iniquity"—not as in any degree a palliation of his guilt, but solely as a reason for intreating of God what we all need—regeneration of heart and nature by the Holy Spirit. He justifies God even when he lies on the earth, the subject and the victim of his severest chastisement. His sense of the inexcusable greatness of his sin made him feel that no sufferings meted out to him were beyond his deserts, or inconsistent with the justice of God. Regarding sin as the leprosy of the

soul, he prays in Levitical words, charged however with evangelical meaning, that God would "purge" his soul of its deep crimson stain, and cleanse him from all sin, original and actual, by that precious blood shed for the remission of sins. It alone makes our polluted robes shining white; it alone makes the soul whiter than snow.

The longer he prays, the nearer he draws to God as to his Father, while he cries, "Create in me a clean heart; . . . cast me not away from thy presence; . . . restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." What liberty of speech! What intensity of prayer! What a precedent for us at the throne of grace! "Let us draw near with boldness," in the name of Jesus. He rises high above the forms and ceremonies of the tabernacle and the temple, when he says, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; Thou delightest not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." A soul emptied of all its self-righteousness, dispossessed of all its vain trusts, and presented to God a suppliant for mercy to forgive, and the presence of the Holy Ghost to sanctify, that is the spirit God accepts, and this the man God makes his son. There is forgiveness with God for life's greatest sin. But that forgiveness must be sought with all the earnestness of a passion, with all the force of a deep-seated conviction. David's sin cries along the ages, "Let none presume or stand in their own strength, or march in self-confidence into temptation."

David's litany that pierced the skies and entered the ear of his heavenly Father, and was responded to in pardon, in acceptance, in restoration to favour, is a lesson to all, that none need despair. "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." If David was forgiven, why not I? If Paul, the chiefest of sinners, why not I? Let us pray. Let us all offer up David's prayer in the name of David's offspring, the only Mediator, from the heart, anywhere, and at any hour, and we shall feel within the breath of the heavenly words, "Be of good



Figure 6. 1844

cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." Having prayed with David in the fifty-first Psalm, we shall praise with David in the hundred and third Psalm, and finally reign with David in the number of those white-robed ones who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and stand before the throne with palms in their hands, and hunger no more, and are led unto living fountains of water, and have all tears wiped from all their eyes.



David's Trials by Absalom.



AVID was doomed to taste the cup his sins had mingled. Over all his life the shadow of his great sin projected. Pardoned by infinite mercy as a sinner, he was sorely chastened as a son.

Absalom basely inaugurated an insurrection against the crown, the country, and the laws of his father David. Absalom's conduct was that of a democrat—disloyal, restless, and tumultuous. We see great ostentation, pomp, and parade in this young man.

He believed that, people's senses being led captive, their intellects and their attachments might be calculated upon. Absalom therefore displayed great splendour, and prepared chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him in costly and shining livery. He rose up early, and appeared before the people with all the pomp and circumstance of royalty; and when he found any one going to get his matters righted in the presence of the king, he met him, and said, "See, thy matters are good and right; you need not come to get them settled; it is all right; you have it all your own way; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee." Absalom said, moreover, "Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice." As much as to say, "There is no justice in this land; you have bad laws, you are the subjects of a great tyrant, you

have an iron sceptre over you. If you could only see the propriety and the expediency of making me your king, instead of that old foolish father of mine, David, what a happy land would this be; the very desert would blossom like the rose; every man would get justice, every quarrel would be put right." "And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment; so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel;" by trickery, by treachery, by lies, by pretences facts disproved, by promises only to be broken—by such means he stole the hearts of the great body of the men of Israel, till at length they were prepared to elect him king. He forgot that the same passions that put him up would soon have pulled him down. But thirst for power is so strong in the unsanctified heart, that it will risk the issue for the transient glory of a temporary sovereignty. "And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the Lord, in Hebron." David let him go, thinking there was nothing wrong. Hebron was the place of Absalom's birth: it was also the place where David his father was crowned. He thought there was a traditional glory on the spot, that would make his projects more successful. "And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron." And he sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron." This was the way of transmitting telegraphic signals in ancient times. The spies were all arranged at certain distances; one sounded the trumpet; the second caught up the sound, and sounded his; the third caught it up, and sounded his; and thus a signal was rapidly conveyed in the various directions which the party giving it desired. Absalom, with great craft, sent for Ahithophel, David's own counsellor, "from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong, for the people increased continually with Absalom. And there came

a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee." How can we explain this strange alteration in the feelings of David? On former occasions, none was so brave as he; he was always in the van, his battles generally victories; and even when the standard of his country was lowered, his heart rarely fainted, and his courage seldom faltered. How comes it, then, that, no sooner does he hear that this profligate young man had assumed to be king, and that he had got hold of his own prime-minister, Ahithophel, who was offering sacrifices when he joined the conspiracy (and never are so great crimes done as when they are done under the cloak of religion; and of all men, hypocrites are always ready for the wickedest and the worst of things), than he at once gave up his cause as desperate, and he and all his servants went over into the desert? How do we account for this? Easily enough. Cowardice is often the product of a conscience wrong before God. David was told when he had committed his great sin, "I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house." David remembered God's threat; his conscience brought vividly before him his own great sin, by which he had made the enemies of Israel to blaspheme; his courage therefore evaporated, he gave up all, and retreated, a miserable, heart-broken fugitive, into the desert; retaining, however, in his flight the traces of his early piety, for he said, "If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again to his habitation: but if He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him." Thus was the shadow of his sin projected from Jerusalem into the depths of the desert—thus was his heart broken, his courage shattered; and the fear strong within him—for he calls Absalom a king—that he was no more to mount his throne, or to wear his crown.

Ittai the Gittite accompanied the king. David bade him go, as



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DAVID AND HIS FRIENDS RETREATING FROM ABSALON.

he was a Gentile, and therefore not necessarily bound to risk his life for David, saying, "Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king"—that is, Absalom—"for thou art a stranger, and also an exile." But Ittai the Gittite, with a courage, a friendship, and a loyalty which neither Absalom nor the prime-minister possessed, said, "As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be." Here was a god-like man, a man of true heart. Whilst in Ahithophel, the professing Christian prime-minister, there was developed a project of conspiracy and insurrection against his royal master; in the heart of this pagan, ignorant of the gospel, there lived a heroism, a loyalty, a love, that having not wearied in the best, would not now falter in the worst, of times.

When David quitted his palace, he left ten women to keep his house. It was the custom then to respect women; we scarcely ever hear, in ancient times, after the most terrible conflicts, of women being slaughtered or cruelly cut to pieces. David knew his enemies too well to suspect that they would kill or maltreat the helpless women he had left merely to keep the palace till he, or God's own appointed sovereign, should again take possession of it.

David prayed that God would turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. When he came to the top of the Mount of Olives, Hushai, the Archite, met him, with his coat rent, and earth upon his head—a symbol of deep distress. David said, "If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me. But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; as I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant; then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel." Such was the craven and cowardly feeling that had taken possession of him that slew the giant Goliath, and was foremost in the battle, undaunted when all about him despaired! The

explanation of it lies, as is obvious, in the sin that he felt in his conscience, accompanied by his deep conviction that God's awful threat was now fulfilling. He also knew well that the bitterest cup he might be doomed to drink was not too bitter for the great sin of disloyalty to the King of kings, and disobedience to his holy law.



David Numbering the People.



HIS act was not in itself a breach of any one of the ten commandments, or any permanent moral obligation. Moses numbered the people, and did what was right. Why should David, following this ancient precedent, have done wrong? It is the motive that give its place, its tone, and moral value or moral worthlessness, to what we do. David's actuating motives were, unquestionably, pride, vain-glory, distrust in God, and confidence in elements divinely excluded from a people set apart as witnesses for God, and meant to be a separate nationality. He was bound as king to act in the spirit of that religion which was the cement of his throne, the strength of his dynasty, and the glory of the people Israel. God arose out of his place to show his displeasure, and to inflict the retribution most justly provoked. A great public delinquency demanded a great national judgment. He gave David his choice of one of three rods or scourges—war, pestilence, or famine. David, in making his choice, showed that his heart still retained its first love to God, and sympathy with his people. Had he selected war or famine, he might have sheltered himself from their destroying action by the resources of the royal treasury. But by accepting pestilence, he accepted what smites with unsparing stroke the king, the noble, and the peasant. There was here something generous and

noble and unselfish in this decision. Yet, in one respect it is better to "fall into the hand of the Lord," where man has no power to aggravate or even act, than to come directly into contact with the passions and the prejudices of man. Each of the judgments would necessarily come from God, but pestilence was the one in which the agency of man would have no place. Seventy thousand men fell in the course of the destructive visitation—God thus punishing David just when his pride and his sin had been displayed. David felt for the victims, confessed himself the criminal, and prayed that God would spare his suffering sheep. An altar was built, sacrifices were offered, prayers and supplications rose with the ascending smoke, and the plague was stayed.

Thus subjects suffer the consequences of the sins of their rulers. This is actual history ; we see it every day. Scripture does not create, but assert it. How dutiful, therefore, to pray for kings and all in authority, that we may lead quiet and peaceful lives.

We see next that a time of pestilence should be a time of prayer. God permits the punishment when He does not send it, and He can withdraw it when all human skill is powerless.

Lastly, the past sins of a people are often associated with their greatest future blessings. The temple rose on that very hill on which expiatory offerings were made, in order to propitiate the just judgment of God. So they might see how little they deserved, how gracious God is.



David's Last Step.



RULY, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death" (1 Sam. xx. 3). These words were uttered by David in circumstances of singular peril; but it is not one whit less true of the youngest and the oldest, the healthiest and the sickliest, that there is between him and death only a single step. This is not true only on the field of battle, where every moment may be the last, or upon the ocean, when wind and waves wrestle in their wrath, and in an instant one may be buried in the deep; but at every beat of the heart, in every place we occupy, in every circumstance of health, and strength, and brightening prospects, it is strictly true, and all experience attests it, and the solemnity of it should not be without its lesson to us, there is but a step between me and death. In every beat of the heart, the interval between each beat is death; the beat is the "step," the cessation of the beat is "death." God gives the heart its every beat. Were He to cease to repeat his touch, the next moment the machinery would stop, and life would be extinct. Physiologists cannot tell us why the heart beats in the humblest animal, in the minutest organism, or in the healthiest and the strongest man. They can trace muscles to nerves, and nerves to the brain; they can trace the electric wires, if I may so call them, that connect the brain with the heart, and the heart with the brain, and are the media

of interchanged volitions, and affections, and impulses, but they can tell nothing further. We Christians know the mystery, it is not a figure, not a fancy, but a rigid, literal fact, as literal as that two and two make four, "In God we live, and move, and have our being."

While there is so little between man and death, while we occupy every moment as it were an isthmus wasted by the waters of time, and washed by the waves of eternity, man is yet constantly regarded throughout the whole Scripture what indeed he must feel himself to be even amid the objects of creation, as a being of stupendous importance, of inexpressible greatness. Contending eternities gather round man, hell seeking to gain him, heaven waiting to receive him. About us in the world are creatures of vast durability, of great splendour, of exquisite organization, yet upon no creature, animate or inanimate, has God expended a thousandth part of the care that He has expended upon man. It is true of all creatures, from the emmet up to the eagle in his eyry, from the bee to the great behemoth, that God made them, and beautifully and exquisitely they are made; but it is true of man, as it is not of any animal whatever, that he is redeemed as well as made, not with gold and silver, for all the riches of the universe are too paltry to be put into the scale, but with the "precious blood of a Lamb without spot and without blemish." For man the rains descend, for man the air blows, for man springs return—the constant type of the coming restoration—for man autumn ripens its fruits, and Nature sits amid her sheaves like a mother amid her children, rejoicing and praising God; for man the world itself is carried on; man's greatness, even in his wreck, is unspeakable. And yet strange, between this grand and beautiful creature, this creature so prized and precious, and death, there is but a step. What aggravates, if I may so speak, this strange constitution is that this step does not rest with us. If between this grand creature, grand in his ruins, and death, there be but a step, if the step had been of our settling, choosing, and fixing, we could have understood it; but this



H. CLARKE.

David rebuked by Nathan.

step is so little in our arrangement and subject to our will that our first step in the morning may be our last step. One gets into a railway carriage, or travels in a steamboat, or enters a street cab, or turns a corner, and finds how rigidly true it is, "There is but a step between me and death." We do not know what step is to be our last, but we do know that this step will carry us at once to the judgment seat of God. How paramount, how pressing the question, Is all right with me now ; and shall all be right with me when the great white throne is the only object on which my eyes shall rest, and from which my destiny shall be launched ?

Apart from the light of revelation, can we suppose that a creature so beautifully made, so precious, capable of so vast enterprises, so ministered to by God and angels, has nothing to look for beyond this last step ? Can we suppose that such a being as man is to be snuffed out at once ; that such a noble piece of intellectual, moral, and physical mechanism is by this trifling step to cease to be ? Can we admit for a moment, even as a matter of reasoning, that the slightest accident, as the world calls it, quenches a life that God ministers to, and to recover which He bowed the heavens, and gave his Son to die ? One might almost infer, without a positive text asserting man's immortality, that eternity is the necessary complement of time—that hereafter is essential for the just and proper solution of here—and that the very littleness of the thing which ends man's life here almost embosoms the prophecy that that step, though the last of one level on which man has been treading fifty or sixty years, only lifts him to a higher level where he shall live for ever. But in the case of a Christian—so far in the case of all, but in the case of a Christian—it is emphatically true that death is but the last of a series and a succession of steps. The whole of life consists of a succession of steps ; one step is from childhood to youth, another from youth to manhood, another from manhood to old age, and the last step is only from this life to the better and the brighter life. We

have a step from poverty to riches, a step from sorrow to joy, a step from single life to married life, and at last a step from grace to everlasting glory. Thus, death, looked at in the light of the Sun of Righteousness, monstrous as it looks in the mere light of nature, is only the last step in a series of progressions, in a Christian's case the happiest of all. It is this one fact that denudes death to a Christian of half its terrors, and arms the soul for that last step which is simply across the narrow stream that divides time from eternity, and our entrance into our Father's presence, our everlasting home, where are the spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant. Hence, if an old man be a true Christian—and all is contingent upon that—old age is simply being a good deal nearer the new age than middle age; so that the whitening hair seems to reflect only the brightening light of nearing, ever-nearing day, and the weakness of the old man's memory, the failing of his sight, the deadening of his hearing, is the soul withdrawing its forces from the shores of the world, and concentrating all its energies that it may take the last step that makes it free of the universe itself. That slackening of the pulse which an old man feels, and his desire for repose, relates to eternity as a child feels of a winter evening in reference to his bed—the old man is getting sleepy, approaching his last sleep, from which he wakens in everlasting and joyous refreshment. Thus we can look at death as a bright thing, if we look at it in the light of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. In a churchyard or a cemetery, one is annoyed to see broken columns, inverted torches, or the heavy Egyptian sarcophagus, upon the ashes of the dead. These are anachronisms in a Christian's burial ground; they are meet, and right, and proper for heathen grounds; but on a Christian's grave a few sweet spring flowers would be far more tasteful, and not less artistic, certainly more suggestive of hope, immortality, and resurrection from the grave, than all the remains of Egyptian and classic architecture together. A Christian's death is simply his last

step, on his way home, by which he rises from the low levels of this world to that sunny table-land where all is beautiful, where no blight falls, where no storm beats, where no thunder hurtles through the air, where there are no tears, no crying, no death ; a land so beautiful that inspiration has emptied mines of their gems, and the ocean of its pearls, and combined the jasper, and the emerald, and the diamond, and the sapphire, in order to set forth its magnificence—a magnificence which language fails adequately to depict.

It is reasonable to conclude that a step on which so much depends has not been consigned to chance. I do not believe in chance ; I believe in God the Father. If it could be proved that a hair can fall from an old man's head by chance, it can be proved that a star may fall from its socket by the same chance. If it can be proved that there is no providence in all that is exquisitely minute, we can demonstrate by the severest logic that there is no providence in all that is magnificently great. The denial of God in little things is the denial of God in all things. Describe it as you like, it is atheism. If so much depends upon this last step, it is unreasonable to suppose it is fortuitous or by chance ; on the contrary, whether the flower is cut down in its prime, or whether the shock is gathered in its season ; whether the step that ends your present path, and begins your heavenly progress, is from the buried wreck in the ocean, or from the crumbling ashes of a great conflagration, or from pining sickness, or from what the world calls accident, or from decrepitude, or decay ; whatever it be, that step you have taken from this level to that higher level was just as fixed and settled before the world began as that Christ should die and sinners should be saved ; there was no chance in it whatever. It is literally true that I am immortal till God has nothing more for me to do. There is not a Christian, however lowly his sphere or great his position, who will not be kept safe from Saul's wrath, it may be through the instrumentality of Jonathan's friendship, until he has

finished the work that God has for him to do. There is a step between me and death, but God is as truly in that step as He is upon his throne, and amid the praises and the adorations of cherubim and seraphim. Surely this is comfort to a Christian. Let us not merely admit it as we admit some paltry proposition in this world, but let us take it home to the heart as a great truth ; and then the sailor will start upon his voyage, the soldier will go into the conflict, the physician will enter the infected chamber, the visitor will draw near to the bed of the sick ; and man will enter upon his duties as common sense dictates, exercising his reason, and using every proper precaution, but as Christianity inspires ; satisfied that he is safe till God has nothing more for him to do. In this last step taken by a Christian, it is most refreshing to feel there is no part of the universe where God's providence can place him, no part on earth where he may be called in the fulfilment of duty, where that step may not be taken with equal assurance from earth to heaven. In other words, there is no spot in the world where heaven is not as near as it is when we surround a communion table, or sing God's praise in the great congregation. Heaven, oh glorious thought ! is not here, it is not there ; it is like the omnipresence of Him who is its light and its glory everywhere. Over pagodas and minarets, over church towers and chapel spires, over the desert sea and the bleak wilderness, over the great city and the lonely village, heaven equally spreads its encompassing dome ; so that the soldier in warfare, the sailor on the sea, are just as near heaven, and it is as easy to get there in his last step, as in a bright home, and amid great privileges, or in the midst of a Christian congregation. There is only a step to heaven from hall or hovel, from church or chapel, from Asia, Africa, Europe, or America ; for heaven is wherever a holy heart beats, and a Christian child can lift up that heart and say, " Our Father which art in heaven."

But it is faithfulness and duty to state that this step is not in

every case necessarily up ; it is in some cases, alas, not by a decree that cannot be resisted, but by deliberate choice, downward to destruction. Souls go to ruin as well as to heaven ; and it is an awful thought that the soul's capacity of suffering is only equalled by its capacity of joy. Just the very greatness of the soul makes it capable of an enjoyment we cannot conceive, and capable of a woe no tongue can tell. The most splendid palace is destroyed in a few hours by the consuming fire ; the grandest edifice is often swept away by the swollen torrent. So the brightest intellect, the noblest genius, the most brilliant endowments, may go to feed that worm that never dies, and to be the victims of that fire which is never quenched ; for " some will come unto me," says the Saviour, " in that day, and will say, Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works ? " But to show that gifts are worthless if not set in graces, he will say, " Depart from me ye that work iniquity, I know ye not." And it will be the most terrible part of that woe, the keenest element in that fire, that our memory will ever be going back, and ever bringing to us again the terrible recollection that we ourselves ruined ourselves ; that no decree of God crushed us, no predestination damned us, no purpose of heaven drove us here ; that we are self-ruined, and did it all ourselves. If that be true, what we are has very much to do with what we shall be ; the present will reflect and repeat itself for ever and ever upon the endless future. Are you in Christ, which is the state of safety ? Are you born again, which is the only fitness for the kingdom of heaven ? Why do so many people listening to or reading this truth fail to feel its fulness ? A congregation does very much with a responsible thought as five or six porters do with a heavy load ; they distribute the load over several shoulders, so that each feels very little of its weight. When people listen to a statement in a congregation responsible and solemn, each feels he has only an infinitesimal portion of it applicable to him. Let each ask him-

self, Am I trusting in the only Saviour? Am I satisfied that if the step that takes me out of the sanctuary were to take me to the judgment seat of God, I could say, "O Lord, what I deserved my Lord has borne; what I lost my Lord has entitled me to; and in his name and for his sake I ask of Thee to give me not a crumb of bread but a crown of glory"? Let each ask himself, "Would heaven be heaven for me? Should I be fit for the kingdom of heaven? In other words, could I endure an endless Sabbath? could I worship there? could I love as they love? could I rejoice as they rejoice? Am I at this moment repining for a land of light and love, or am I withering down into that wretched state which fits me as tares for burning?" What is hell? What is heaven? Our blessed Lord gives the grand characteristic of the one, and the terrible brand of the other, in few words. He says, "Come unto me, ye blessed;" that is heaven. "Depart from me, ye cursed;" that is hell. In other words, heaven is the soul, under a centripetal attraction, ever approaching nearer and nearer towards God, the central fountain of all joy, its happiness accumulating the nearer it approaches the infinitely remote and inapproachable centre. What is hell? The soul, under a centrifugal force, departing deeper, and deeper, and deeper, into the blackness of darkness for ever; its woe and its misery accumulating as its distance is increased from God, the infinitely holy and happy centre. This progression is not begun hereafter. In other words, there is no man who has not crossed the margin, and come under the centripetal attraction, "Come unto me," or the centrifugal force, "Depart from me." Every man is born or born again. A Christian person was asked one day, "Where were you born?" His answer was, "In Dublin and in Liverpool." The interrogator instantly said, "How can that be?" He said, "I was born in Dublin; I was born again in Liverpool." These words are literally and strictly true. The moment we are born, that moment we are under the centrifugal force; we are born in sin, born in darkness.

But the moment we are born again, the centrifugal force is dissolved, and the centripetal attraction begins ; and thus heaven dawns on earth, brightens as we go, till we take the last step, when it brightens into perfect glory ; and we are ever approaching, and never reaching, yet ever deepening is our happiness and joy as we approach the infinite and blessed centre. Art thou born again ? That requirement of our blessed Lord does not mean except a man's character be patched up a little, except he cease to be a drunkard, except he cease to be a thief, except he cease to be covetous ; that is not what our Lord says. It is quite true, that if you can persuade a man to give up drunkenness you have done him immense good ; if you can persuade a man to give up dishonesty, you have done him service. That man speaks very rashly who condemns good works as if they were all worthless. Honesty, and generosity, and sobriety, we should bless God for ; but what I do repeat is that except there be a change, which is not a reformation, but a revolution, in man's heart, he cannot even see, much less enter, the kingdom of heaven.

In this day, when men squabble and quarrel about churches and chapels, about patronage and popular election, about all the crotchets that Satan fans and fosters, while he can keep out the vital thing, they are losing sight of that great requirement, not except you be a Churchman, or except you be a Dissenter, but "except you be born again, you cannot see the kingdom of heaven."

Do we ever taste on earth crumbs that fall down from our Father's table ? Do we ever in this world have presentiments and foretastes of peace, and happiness, and joy—in our Bibles, in our Saviour, in our hopes of glory—that are, if we have them, prophecies that our last step will be everlasting joy, and happiness, and peace ? It is a very practical, a very important question ; but the unhappy peculiarity of human nature is now what it was in the days of Nicodemus—it carnalizes the word of God. There are two successions absolutely certain—the succession of sinners by nature, and

the succession of saints by grace. We find in Nicodemus just what we find now. When he came to our blessed Lord, he said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." He wanted to enter on a discussion about the evidences, but our Lord put it aside altogether, and told him what was more important—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

If this step between us and death be a step that introduces us to so great and so solemn issues, a destiny of joy or a doom of misery, let us guard against the too common delusion, that all we need to fit us for heaven will of necessity take place in the very last step that we take from this world to the next. This is a great mistake; the narrow stream that we cross between this world and the next has no power of ablution whatever. In other words, death is transference from this world to the judgment-seat. It is not transformation in any sense or shape. Death gleans, death transplants, death reaps; but death does not turn tares into wheat in the minutest possible degree. On the contrary, death fixes for ever what it finds. The whole change that takes place when we die is that of being stamped and perpetuated what we are found to be. If we are then found just, the sentence will be, "Let him be just still;" that is, for ever. If we are then found unjust, the stamp will be, "Unjust for ever;" if we are found unholy, the doom will be, "Unholy for ever;" if found holy, the destiny will be, "Holy for ever." Such is all that death does. If we could only see that heaven must commence here, or it never will commence at all, we should be less thoughtless, less unconcerned. We need no literal worm to make up the miseries of the lost; I can conceive what a fearful suffering will be there. Conceive the drunkard, with all his thirst for intoxicating drink intensified, and no means of gratifying it; let the impure man be there, with all his impure passions intensified, and growing the longer that

he lives, with no means of gratification ; let the ambitious man be there, with his thirst after honours, and renown, and power, and greatness, the passion intensified the longer he lives, but the gratification of it impossible. What a hell is there ! What a terrible state of torment ! Were all this a poet's dream, a theologian's fancy, I would not mention it ; but our blessed Lord says there is a possibility of lost souls, as well as an instant welcome to heaven for all that will receive it. If so, we ought to try to feel the solemn responsibility before we take, or rather are summoned to take, that last step. Have we embraced by faith the offers of the glorious gospel ? Have we brought our mind by faith to Christ for enlightenment, our heart by faith to Christ for sanctification, our conscience by faith to Christ for peace ? If we be Christians, the grave is near, but heaven is as near ; death may be near, but glory is as near. Our hearts and our treasure, our sympathies and our hopes, have all preceded us ; and we can now, therefore, enter on the duties and fulfil the obligations of life with perfect peace.

How comforting, if this be true, is the death of those we grieve over, who, however, have fallen asleep in Christ. If our dead were Christians, then the death that we deplore is simply their having taken a step higher. The loss we have sustained, and feel, and must feel, is their everlasting gain. Those we call dead have not ceased to be, they have only ceased to be seen—that is all ; they have stepped from the lower room into the higher, the brighter, and the better one ; or, rather, they have risen from the cold, damp crypt that is below the ground into that sunlit cathedral in which are many side chapels, but all under the same magnificent roof, and in which are many worshippers worshipping God in different dialects, but dialects of the same catholic tongue ; and giving praise, and honour, and thanksgiving unto Him who made their last sleep everlasting refreshment, and the step that was unexpected upon earth to be a step into glory, honour, and blessedness. Therefore, whatever

be the mode in which Christians die, it matters not ; we shall meet, and know them, and recognize them again. Not a lineament that death has overlaid that shall not be reproduced ; not a feature that the grave has concealed that will not be again displayed ; not an element of identity that will not be restored in purity, in splendour, in immortal beauty, never to be hidden or lost any more. And therefore a Christian may feel, not only that he is as near heaven wherever he is, but that in whatever way he dies, his body is equally in the keeping of the Son of God.

There is but one way to heaven. Were that way restricted to church or chapel, to sect or party, it would be very sad indeed ; but the way that leads to heaven is here, there, and everywhere. Jesus Christ Himself has told us, "I am the way : . . . no man cometh unto the Father but by me." And it is the peculiarity of that way that it is everywhere. He says, "Whosoever two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Now are you seeking heaven, not because you have taken the sacrament, nor because you have been baptized—for that is worth nothing as a right to heaven—nor because you are moral, that is beautiful upon earth ; but because of something more that is wanted for heaven ? Are you seeking heaven for no reason upon earth save that Christ's righteousness is on you, your title, and Christ's blood availeth unto you, your sacrifice ; and that his name, the password of the universe, lies deepest and dearest in the innermost recesses of your heart, all you can trust in, all you can plead, all you can urge, when the lights of time shall be merged into the splendours of eternity ?

A soul may be lost ; and what a loss ! Try to conceive the terrible loss ! If you thought you were to lose all the property that you are possessed of next year, you would reasonably be very troubled by the prospect. If you thought you were to lose your eyesight or your hearing next year, it would be very distressing to you ; and it is very natural it should be so. But a lost soul—lost, never to be regained !



David mourning Absalom.

If a man lose his money, earned by toil and trouble, he may recover it ; if he lose his eyesight, by an exquisite provision in Nature which indicates the goodness of Him that made us, the ear becomes more susceptible, and the touch more delicate, and a compensatory process instantly begins. If he lose one friend, a Jonathan, he can find another friend equal or superior to him. But all these losses are but as dust in the balance, in comparison of that most awful phenomenon in eternity a lost soul !

What shall it profit you, what shall it profit me, if—what is uncertain—we gain the whole world, and lose our own soul ? Can we say, “Well, I am not what I should be ; but it is my prayer that I may become what God desires I should be ?” Can you say, with all your defects, with so much needing forgiveness, so much that you deplore, that the strain, and bent, and bias of your heart is that God would justify you, and sanctify you, and ripen you for heaven, for happiness, and for Himself ?



David's Dying Charge to Solomon.



AVID, at the close of a troubled life, was now about to go the way of all the earth. Like Abraham and Jacob, he died giving weighty counsels to those destined to succeed him, full of practical wisdom, suitable for a king to give, and for his subjects to receive. "Keep the charge of the Lord thy God"—the first and most sacred duty—make religion in government the chief thing, and national blessings will follow; "walk in his ways," ways of pleasantness and of peace, in the love, and knowledge, and practice of them; "keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies," in memory, in heart, conscience, and habit, "as it is written in the law of Moses," the word of God, the only rule of faith and life. The result of this obedience to God's statutes, will be prosperity and success. This is the experience of ages and nations. "If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and all their soul, there shall not fail thee a man on the throne of Israel." God's promises reach to the third and fourth generation of those that accept and believe.

Respecting Joab the son of Zeruiah, whose life had been stained by deeds of blood, who had also with Adonijah endeavoured to establish a kingdom in opposition to that of David, as well as contrary to the express will and authority of God, he said to Solomon,

"Do according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace." Such was not an act of private revenge, but a public judicial act; it was law laid down by the only fountain of law, the king, a despot, but a despot controlled by God's written word, and of all governments a despotism is the best, if the despot be a perfect man. David was the earthly fountain of law, legislative and executive. This polity is still kept up in Eastern countries. When the Sultan of Turkey found a high officer had committed treason, without any form or judicial process, he sent the executioner to put him to death. The deed was legal and according to the constitution of the country. This infliction of punishment upon Joab was not therefore a piece of personal spite gratified by his death, but a great public and judicial act. It was a just retribution for his many murders and crimes. The judge, therefore, about to die leaves the legacy of duty with the judge appointed to succeed him, and he was bound to carry out what was right. God's great law is, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

Another order given by David to Solomon seems to many a much more grievous one. The apparent grievousness of it arises from a slight inaccuracy in our translation. Speaking of Shimei, who cursed David, he said, "Now therefore hold him not guiltless; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood." Shimei is not accused of murder by David, and the punishment of a murderer was therefore not his due; but our translation reads as if David had instructed Solomon to put Shimei to death. By a singular construction in the original, which our translators have not noticed, the negative particle in the Hebrew when given in one clause is understood to continue in the clause that follows, and being so the words read according to the Hebrew, the reverse of what is stated. He said, "Now therefore hold him not guiltless; and his hoar head bring NOT thou down to the grave with blood."

There was much in ancient Jewish customs it is not desirable to

impart into modern civilization. But there were also in its severest enactments much which deserves our best consideration. God was educating a people for a higher level upon earth as well as preparing them for an eternity still higher. Hence it will be found that there were in the arrangements and enactments of God a wisdom and appropriateness in relation to these great ends that lift the legislation of Israel high above that of all contemporary nations.



The Patriarch David on Heaven and Earth.

A LESSON.



WHOM have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee (Psa. lxxiii. 25). I do not know whether the words of David may be called a question, or an exclamation. Whether the one or the other, it is a very important passage of Holy Writ. A

Christian alone can utter it; God alone can inspire it in the human heart: and he who feels this creed to be the exposition of his sentiments, or rather of his feelings, is one taught of God—an heir of the kingdom of heaven.

It is very interesting to notice the distinction between a Christian on earth and a Christian in heaven. He says, "Whom have I in heaven?" "There is none I desire upon earth." Having is the characteristic of heaven; desiring is the characteristic of earth. In heaven there is no prayer, for all is had; on earth there is little praise and more prayer, for most remains yet to be had. On earth we are ever desiring, never satisfied; in heaven we are ever having, and always satisfied. The one, "There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee," tells us that this is not our rest; for it is the place of desire. The other, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" shows that heaven is the place of having, and that there remaineth a rest for the people of God. But whether in the case of the

Christian, or in the case of the man of the world, desire is the constant, and ever-expanding spring. In the case of the man of the world, it is desire ever disappointed, never satisfied ; in the case of the Christian, it is desire never disappointed, and yet never satisfied. The desires of this world soon land a man in disappointment ; the desires of a Christian in this world only leave him to dissatisfaction, never to disappointment. The man of the world is always seeking and never satisfied. He feels what we have all felt, that the horizon widens ever as we traverse it ; that the bounding line of to-day is the commencing line of to-morrow ; that man always is to be, but never is completely blessed. There is not one of us who does not live more in the future than in the present. All that we have now only stimulates us to desire something that is still to be had. There is not one living, who has reached the culminating point of his hope, the prize for which he lives upon earth ; not one who can say, "I am now perfectly satisfied ; let my progression cease ; I want nothing more ; I desire nothing as a substitute ; I am perfectly satisfied." There is no such feeling, because earth is the place of desire ; the future only is the place of having.

But the distinction between a worldly man's desire, and a Christian's is just this, that a Christian upon earth ever desires, but is never disappointed, and yet never satisfied. What he receives he is thankful for ; but he makes his desire a fresh reason for drawing on the unsearchable riches of God, and seeking still more. In a worldly man's desires there is hope ; in a Christian man's desires there are joys. The very sense of want in a Christian's bosom has its measure of happiness accompanying. A Christian is ever desiring, and ever seeking that satisfaction which is to be reaped and realized only in heaven. He finds his joy accumulates with his supply, and his progress as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. In the future alone will all these desires be fully met. Heaven alone is the place of having. There

desire is no sooner born than it is satisfied. There want and fulness, like sound and echo, perpetually succeed each other; and the instant that man's heart in the realms of the blessed is conscious of a deep want, that instant an angel's hand supplies it with more than it can conceive or imagine. The heart there has found its object, the dove its rest, the affections their polarity; man is, and is perfectly happy.

Let us study David's condition upon earth as having no person that he desires but God; and secondly, David's condition in the realms of the blessed, as having there all that he did desire upon earth; and lastly, the nature of this portion, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

What does a Christian desire upon earth? Earth is the scene of desire; what does he desire?

The very first desire of a Christian is the presence of God—not in the sanctuary and at the communion table only, but in the warehouse, in the streets, amid the busy traffic of the world, a Christian feels the idea of a present God not an intrusive one, but a joyful, a sanctifying, and a happy one. That presence, he feels, spreads over earth a celestial lustre, and gives to its commonest scenes a consecration, which the wear, and tear, and rush of the waves of this world can never waste or wash away. A worldly man's thought is, "No God;" and if he could only get rid of the disturbing, imminent idea of a God, he thinks he should be happy. A Christian's feeling is, "If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." And there cannot be a better test of real Christianity than the perfect desire that whatever you do God should see and know; that you should not set your pen to a piece of paper without feeling, "If God should see me, I should be perfectly happy;" that you would not engage in a scene, or take your part in a work, in which you would not desire God to be present; in short, that in your brightest moments, and in your darkest ones, you should feel the necessity that God should be there. The world's idea of God is very different.

A worldly man thinks the essence of joy is getting rid of God while we are well ; and that the perfection of religion is getting God to lift us to heaven just when we die. A worldly man's idea of religion is, that the presence of God is a capital thing for a funeral, but a very inappropriate one for a marriage. A worldly man's idea of religion is, that in the world's dark scenes the presence of God may be very comforting ; but that in life's sunny spots he had better get rid of God altogether. Such men do not know what God is. The very essence of the gospel is this, that life's sunny spots will have no charm unless the light of God's countenance is upon them ; and that earth's darkest scenes we should be unable to sustain unless God hold us by the right hand, and be the strength of our hearts, and our portion for ever. And therefore, the Christian can, in company with David, take the 139th Psalm with him into every place, feel its application, and rejoice in its truth, and evermore say, " If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence."

This desire of God must show, in the case of the Christian, acquaintance with God. " There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." We cannot desire an unknown God. We may love the unseen, but we cannot love the unknown. And therefore, the fact that a Christian seeks God to be with Him is evidence that the Christian's mind is enlightened in the true character of God. And where does he get this light ? There is but one deposit, and that is the Bible. All outside of it is religious darkness, or a false and misleading medium ; all that is within it is light. Our own impressions of God are always unfavourable. The first notion that a man has of God is, that He is an angry and a wrathful being. The very first thought that we have is, that there is a quarrel between God and us, which there is ; and when we wish to ascertain the character of God, we gather the nature of it from our own feelings. When two persons quarrel, how each dwells upon the wrongs of the other, construes every movement into an insult, and exaggerates every word

as if it were a threat, and forms an interpretation of the character of his foe by the feelings of his own bosom, generated by a sense of its wrong doing ; and when we think of God we think of Him as a foe, we misjudge his character, we misinterpret his providential dealings, and form a notion of God which originates superstition, or kindles fanaticism, but never can inspire confidence. But the Christian does not draw his idea of God from what his own thoughts are ; he consults, not his feelings, but his Bible. He ascertains what God is, not by what the human heart reflects, but by what the sacred page records : " Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace." And when he discovers that God is a Father, waiting to be gracious, delighting in mercy, rejoicing to bless, he has perfect confidence in Him, and longs to feel more, not less of his holy presence. The greatest sin that many Christians commit is entertaining suspicions of God. Thousands come to a Communion table with a sort of feeling that God's countenance is over them as a black cloud, charged with terrible judgments, ready to break upon their heads, and utterly consume them. Others go to the throne of grace, and pray to God as if He were the Great Spirit of the Indian, needing to be propitiated, his wrath deprecated, his judgments averted ; whereas the whole Revelation of the Gospel is, Christianity the exponent of love. The Crucifixion of Jesus is the evidence of his infinite and boundless affection. It is not true that God loves us because Christ died for us ; but it is gloriously true, that God so loved us that Christ did die for us. Christ's death is the expression of his love ; and all that death, or at least the main thing that death has provided, is a blessed and an everlasting channel, by and along which God's mercy can come down in its richest flood to bless us, whilst our prayers arise and reach his ear, and are answered by Him, while justice, and truth, and holiness stand by, and reveal God just, when He justifies the sinner, punishing the sin, and yet pardoning the guilty ; not willing that the worst should perish. but that all

should come to Him and live for ever. When a Christian receives this apprehension of God, the expression of his heart is, "Whom—whom have I in heaven but God? and there is none but this God that I desire upon earth besides."

The language, too, of David on this occasion is the evidence of some experience of what God is. A Christian has tasted joy in communion with God, and that taste, instead of creating satisfaction or apathy, creates a more ardent thirst to know Him more, to love Him better, and evermore to receive of this bread. When, therefore, he has tasted or felt in his heart that God is a Father, that communion with Him is not a fanatic's dream, nor a philosopher's idea, but a Christian's experience, then he desires still more upon earth to know Him better, and love Him more. A ray of heaven dwells upon his heart, and connects that heart with the Sun from which it comes; a rivulet of the Fountain or Life flows through the channel of his heart, and associates him with that Fountain from which it flows. His language therefore is, "Lord, to whom can we go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life." "Evermore give us this bread." "There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

The language of David, too, in this passage denotes that man has many suitors, or candidates for his heart. What a wonderful thing man's soul must be, in that it is surrounded by candidates encamped around it, each waiting, toiling, striving, struggling to master and to possess it! What a great thing must that soul be, which God gave Christ to redeem, which Satan labours and walks about as a lion or watches as a serpent, evermore to destroy, and to which wealth speaks of its charms, and honour of its prizes, and learning of its enjoyments, and luxury of its joys! How great must it be! how important! The angels in heaven estimate its grandeur; the lost demons that are in hell appreciate its magnificence; shall it be left to the grand possessor who has the deepest stake in it, the greatest



David rescuing the lamb.

capital risked in it, to be the most careless about it? There are many candidates for that soul of yours. Honour, wealth, riches, the lust of the life, the pride of life, and the love of the world, all spread their charms before it, all try to arrest your desires from seeking and feeding upon God. But in the midst of all, the Psalmist can say, "There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Honour is found to be but a spangle upon a robe; riches are liable to put forth wings, and flee away; and all the pomp and splendour of the earth is but the funeral drapery of the dead, not that which can meet the great wants of man's great soul, or create within it that happiness without which he must be restless upon earth, and miserable for ever; and, therefore, to each and all a Christian can say, "Get thee behind me, Satan. Whom have I in heaven but God? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Him."

The language of the Psalmist, too, denotes plainly comparison, "None upon earth that I desire beside Thee." He must have compared objects before he could conclude. He must have looked at riches, wealth, honour, he must have analyzed, and weighed, and gauged them before he came to the conclusion—what Solomon came to after him—that all are vanity; that, weighed in the balance, they are lighter than vanity. To be a son of the King of kings is to a Christian the greatest dignity; to be an heir of the unsearchable riches of Christ is to be possessed of the noblest relations; to count all but loss for the excellence of Christ, is Christianity, and nothing short of this will do; to have an object in heaven on whom the heart can supremely rest; to have a prize on earth that the affections can supremely desire, this is the Christianity of the Bible, and all that professes to supersede it is a delusion and a dream.

We see, then, that whether in heaven or on earth the Christian's soul gravitates to God; "Whom," that is, the personal God, "have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire

beside Thee." Then, Christianity is not the acceptance of a doctrine, but it is union with a living God. It is a great mistake to suppose that when you have subscribed an orthodox creed, you are, therefore, a Christian; or that when you have accepted the doctrine of justification by faith you are, therefore, a Christian. Christianity is the heart finding its rest on God, the soul deriving its nutriment from God; so that you can say that the brightest spot in all your soul is that on which God's countenance shines, and the sweetest tone in all music is that name which is above every name, and the brightest hope which irradiates your heart, as with the first beams of the celestial glory, is the hope that you will drink at the Fountain itself, and live for ever in the light of the countenance of your Father and of your God. Such is a Christian's desire upon earth.

Now let us put it practically before ourselves. What is supreme in your heart, my brother, my sister, my father, my mother, my friend? What at this moment is deepest, dearest, in your heart? the loss of which would be to you the greatest misery? what is it, the possession of which kindles the intensest and the most thrilling gratitude? What is supreme in your heart, what absorbs its best affections, kindles its brightest joys, the loss of which would create its deepest sorrow? That is your God. Whether it be money, honour, wealth, wife, children, estate, the great law of the gospel is, that God must be above all in your heart, that your very heart's affections must be inlaid with Deity, that its strings and affections must be strung and tuned to that grand key-note, till that which you love most, and the departure of which you dread most, becomes your relationship to God, and God's relationship to you. We may be communicants in the purest and most orthodox of churches; we may be enthusiastic strugglers for what we believe the rights, the privileges, the blessings, of our native land; we may be intense Churchmen, or we may be strong Dissenters, and yet may not

be Christians all the while. Satan will be delighted to see you struggling for the Church or battling against it, if he can only keep you from Christ. Satan will be delighted if he can fill you with earth's best and most innocent things, and so keep that heart from recognizing the sceptre, glorying in the Cross, and living for the honour of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Let us ask ourselves, Can I say, "There is none"? I see my estate, I hear my name, I look at my books, I behold my children, I look forward to my prospects, my husband, my wife, my father, my mother, my firstborn, and only one, and can I say, while I look at each face, and am thankful for each blessing, that there is none, O Christ, upon earth that I desire beside Thee?

We have, in the second place, what heaven is, "Whom have I in heaven?" Earth is, "There is none I desire beside Thee;" but heaven is, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" Earth is the place of desire, and heaven is the place of having.

Then, the language of David plainly denotes that David looked forward to a future state. Some persons have tried to show, I think most imperfectly, that the ancient Hebrew had no idea of a future life, and that a mere temporal blessing bestowed in this life was the only reward that an ancient Jew could anticipate. I do not think any one can fairly read the Old Testament Scriptures and come to this conclusion. What could David mean, when he said of his child, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me"? What could he mean, when he said, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave"? What could he mean, when he said, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever"? It must have arisen from a thorough apprehension of a future rest remaining for the people of God. But who can bring his mind to believe that the soul is annihilated? that there is no hereafter? If there be no hereafter, it must be that the gates of heaven are closed,

and the soul, if it lives, must wander restless for ever, or it must be that the soul dies the instant that the body dies. But who can bring his mind to believe that this glorious inhabitant within, that thinks, and feels, and joys, and sorrows; this divine being, that often, when the body is reduced to ruins, becomes only more glorious, more eloquent, more suggestive, more happy, when the strings of the harp are rent, the minstrel is swept away? Who can believe that when the tent is struck, the Arab is gone, or has perished under it? Who can so identify the house with the inhabitant, that the destruction of the one must be the annihilation of the other? We believe the very reverse; as soon as this house, in which we tabernacle, becomes unable to be any more a residence; as soon as the period is closed, settled in the unseen records of the sky, the inhabitant leaves it to wait until his better house is ready, when the soul shall rejoin the body, and they shall both be again for ever with the Lord. But it is no mere reasoning from analogy that can teach us the immortality of the soul; nothing but a direct intimation from God can satisfy us. And we can feel it most when we lose the near and the dear, when some face, familiar as the most ancient article in our home, disappears; when some voice that was the music of that home and delightful as a household word is hushed in death; when the one that we walked, and took sweet counsel together with, departs, and is no more than a stone dropped into the depths of the unsounded sea, it is not enough to say to the mourner, "There is a probability that the soul lives;" it is not enough to say, that all analogy, the structure of the plants, of the butterfly, the telescope, and the microscope, all show that that soul will live, and that this body will rise again. These are but presumptions; the weeping mother will not be comforted, as she gazes upon that most painful sight, the pale face of her dead babe, by a conjecture, by a hope; but she will be comforted when she learns that Christ has turned the procession of the dead, and has opened the gates of the grave, and the kingdom

of heaven to all believers. And when the mother shall ask, "Where is my child?" philosophy, science, and analogy can answer merely by repeating the echo; but Christ Jesus in his answer conveys consolation to the heart, and hope of reunion; for "of such as these is the kingdom of heaven." One positive announcement from Christ's lips is worth all the conjectures of philosophy together. "Whom have I in heaven?" David then anticipated a future. We anticipate a future; and what he saw dimly is brought to us clearly to light.

We learn from this expression of David that God alone is the great joy of heaven. I bade you take an inventory of all you had on earth, and when you counted, weighed, and estimated it all, ask your heart, "Canst thou say, There is none of these I desire in preference to God?" And now I would ask you to shoot your thoughts into the celestial presence, to think of that world whose sunshine has no shadow, whose music has no melancholy minor running through it, where all is perfect joy, because all is perfect holiness—shoot your affections into that land. Some of you have parents there, others of you children, others near and dear relatives there; and it may be an attraction to you that they are there—nay, it is so; for God thus brings it to pass that many a family has a greater interest in heaven than it has on earth: the largest section of it is in heaven, and the mother's heart must naturally vibrate to that spot where the children are. It is in great mercy that God thins the home that is below, and thus crowds the bright home that is above, that they that remain may be ever ready to leave the poor and paltry things that are behind, and to rise, as on angel's wings, and not rest till they mingle with the blessed and joyous company that are above. And yet, even in heaven it is the presence of the Son of God that is to be the greatest charm, the strongest attraction, and to occupy the noblest themes, and draw out the holiest affections, of a believer's heart. David, who recollected that

aged Jesse was there, that the babe born of Bathsheba whom he loved was there, was so struck with the grandeur of that home, and with the greatest object that gave that home all its glory, and lighted it up with all its splendour, that he could turn his back upon the aged Jesse, and upon the beloved babe, and he could say, "Oh, my Lord, as there has been none upon earth that I have desired beside Thee, there is none now in the realms of joy that I desire to have beside Thee. Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

God is the portion of the believer's soul; God alone is his portion—can be a portion to a believer's soul, for He only is congenial to its nature. You could not fill a bushel with ideas; the thing is absurd. You cannot fill man's soul with material or created objects. It is the greatest evidence of man's greatness that nothing will satisfy his soul but God. It is the evidence of man's fall that he is always toiling and trying to satisfy it with something short of God; and it is the evidence of God's great mercy that He will allow a believer's heart to get rest and satisfaction nowhere, until it return to its true rest, the Rock of everlasting ages. Man's soul, therefore, must have a portion, if worthy of the name, suitable to it, and that portion is only God Himself. No gift of God can be a substitute to the soul for the great Giver. God's favour is not enough without Himself. To seek God in order merely to make us happy is to use God as an instrument, and not as an end; it is to make the Creator carry us to the creature; it is to borrow God's omnipotence, in order to dislodge the wearer of it by some of his own great gifts; it is to seek our strength, and our safety, and our joy in something short of God; and it is to form the degrading idea, that God is to carry us to enjoyment in creation, instead of cherishing the magnificent conception, that all creation is only to carry us to God. We must, therefore, have in our soul, in order that may it be happy, an object worthy of it.

In order to have perfect happiness, we must have an object adequate to its vast and infinite capacities. Man's soul has capacities so great, that nothing but the infinite can fill them. It has a thirst so strong, that nothing but living water can satisfy it. That soul is ever soaring to higher orbs, never resting upon any, ever discovering possibilities of good and prospects of peace, yet never reaching any upon earth. So upward and onward is its career, so unsatisfactory every spring it drinks from, every bread it eats, every object it applies to, that nothing short of the Creator of all can fill its great capacities. Nothing but immensity can be the home, nothing less than eternity the lifetime, of the humblest child of God.

This portion, in order to be perfect happiness must be ours. That which is not ours never can make us happy. This object, therefore—God—must be ours before we can have perfect happiness. And, blessed be his name, his own revelation is, that he is our God, and that we are his people. As He is ours, the possession is our greatest joy. "I go," says the Saviour, "to prepare many mansions, and I will receive you"—where? not to the many mansions, but—"to myself."

David does not say, "Whom have I in heaven but thy presence? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thy presence." Not "thy throne," not "thy joy," not "thy blessing," but "Thyself." "It is Thee I desire upon earth, it is Thee I long to be with in heaven. Thy kingdom will not satisfy me without the King. A millennium of glory will not satisfy me without Christ, the Sun in the midst of it." Having God, we have all; having anything short of God, there is a want that will be felt, and must be felt for ever.

This portion that David had, and the Christian has, is an unchangeable portion. Nothing in and of this world is unchangeable. Our feelings change, our tastes change, our estates change, our families change. All things are in a ceaseless ebb and flow—

ceaseless retrogression and progression; and it is no wonder that man, in his best and holiest moments, longs for some fixtures beyond the tide mark, some strong rock amidst the ebbing and the flowing waves, resting upon which, he can bathe in the sunshine and hear the harmonies of a better and a happier land. That rock is the Rock of Ages; that unmoved One amid the waves is our God; and from amidst those waves, and all the changes and the vicissitudes of life, a Christian may look up, and say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

Let us rejoice to know that the desire of Christ is inseparable from ultimately having Christ. What a blessed thought, that He who implants the desire on earth will satisfy that desire in heaven! The desire He implants He will fill, and He gives the desire that He fills, and He fills the desire that He implants. The very desire of God is grace, and that desire shall be unfolded in the perfect fruition of God throughout eternity.

We have, then, first of all, an evidence of the greatness of the capacity of man's soul. There is something in the soul of man that nothing on earth will satisfy. The rush of the world without God is to find something that will satisfy it. The experience of the world without God—it may not be expressed by the world, but it has been anticipated by Solomon—is, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." The outward cisterns of the soul, the outward rains of heaven may fill; but its inward, its deep, its unsounded capabilities of joy, of felicity, of bliss, no created thing can adequately fill. Man's soul was made to be happy—painful fact that man's experience should be, still seeking that happiness where God has said it is not to be found.

The possession of the Christian religion as a reality in our hearts is the possession of happiness. Persons have often an idea that, in asking them to become Christians, we ask them to go into some purgatorial realm, where they will undergo heavy trials, great pain,

many crucifixions, but have no element of joy, or peace, and happiness to sustain them. It is quite true you will meet with trials; it is perfectly certain you will have to carry a cross; through much tribulation we must pass into heaven; but if you look at what you will have to endure as Christians from the stand-point, if I may use the expression, of fallen humanity, you will surely see the cup full of untempered bitterness, and you will not see the sweet that Christ pours into it; and therefore you can have no idea of the compensatory joys and strength which are to be received from Him. You are not to think of the crosses from the position that you now occupy; but to remember that, in the tribulation, there will be no lack of love in the Son of man—that He will share the heavy burden with you—that his strength is made perfect in weakness—and that his soldiers never go to warfare at their own charges.

A Christian has an inward spiritual life, which nothing but living bread can satisfy. The spiritual life is a reality, and the soul that has been quickened by grace has appetencies in it that living bread only will satisfy. A man whose heart has been renewed regards science, and philosophy, and literature, and museums, and universities, in this relation, as husks, not bread; and it sees bread only in its Father's house, and to Him it will arise and go, and ask that bread. Hence, wherever there is a truly converted man, there cannot be long an unconverted ministry. Either he will leave it, or the ministry will be changed. The grand guarantee that there will be holy and converted men in every pulpit is, that there are converted, holy people in every pew. It is not a patron, it is not a bishop, it is not a presbytery, it is not popular election, which can guarantee that a Church shall be supplied by truly converted ministers. He that stretched out the firmament, He that lighted it with all its splendour, He that died upon the cross, alone can make a true minister; and unless He make him, no machinery, however little its friction, no diplomatic arrangements,

however skilful, no management of patron or people, can ever secure a spiritually minded minister. If people wrangled less about systems, and prayed more that the Lord of the harvest would send forth labourers into the vineyard, we should have less to find fault with, and more to be thankful for, in the Christian ministry.

David's words must come home to us with great power in seasons of affliction and trial. There are moments in the experience of every man, when earth loses all the attraction it once possessed. There have been moments in your experience when the noblest halls, and the richest provisions, and the most splendid prospects have been disenchanted of all their glory; and you have felt the noblest title sound harsh, and the brightest sun grow pale, and the largest wealth become poor, while you gazed upon the bier on which lay stretched the beloved and the dearest dead. What, at such a moment and such an hour can comfort you, except the experience of the son of Jesse, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Or some great flood has burst upon you without a moment's warning, that has swept away the shelter under which you lived so sweetly, that has rooted up the tree under whose shadow you found protection, refreshment, and peace; amid the universal desolation, how glorious to be able to say, "O God, whom have I in heaven but Thee, and Thee I still have? and there is none upon earth besides Thee I still desire. My heart and my flesh fainteth and faileth; but thou art a husband to the widow, thou art a father to the orphan, thou art the stay, the strength, and the support of the broken heart, and the bruised spirit, and my portion for ever." And in that last hour which must overtake every one of us—a dying hour—how consolatory to be able to express our feelings in the language of David, the son of Jesse! When we lie down upon the last pillow, how little comfort can you get from anything upon the earth on which we are living! Even the consolations of your nearest friends feel poor, and the riches of



David's dying charge to Solomon.

your greatest possessions weigh light. If you have no eye to penetrate the future, and to rise into the presence of God, and to bring back that thought which David felt when he expressed his feelings, a dying hour will be to you a very sad one. But if, like Stephen of old, you can see God and Jesus at his right hand, and if you can say, like many a Christian, "I am blind, but thy light shall illuminate me,—I am empty, but thy fulness shall fill me,—I am naked of merit, but thy righteousness shall clothe me,—I am dying, but thou art ready to receive me"—it will be well. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My heart and my flesh faint and fail; but Thou art the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

Heaven and earth have but one religion, and one God. Earth is not one empire, and heaven another, but both heaven and earth are provinces of the same great empire. God is desired here; God is possessed hereafter. In this province every soul is desiring, and God is its supply; in that better one every soul is satisfied, and God is its satisfaction.

David's was an expression of personal religion. The language is, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." The great question is not, Which church is best? but, Am I a Christian? Do I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ? Is David's language the echo of mine? or rather, is his the religion, and mine the echo? Is his God my God? Is his desire my desire? Is his having my having? Is his hope my hope? Days that will try and test us all are at our doors. The first footfall of approaching judgments has already been heard. We are rushing into times when there shall be tribulations such as never have been; and the only men that will stand the ordeal, become more beautiful in the trial, will be those men whose hearts have these words engraven deepest upon them by the Holy Spirit of God.

Lastly, the words of David are the words of perfect decision. There is no faltering, no doubting. He does not say, "There is none in heaven that I hope I shall have, but Thee." He does not say, "There is none upon earth that I expect to desire beside Thee." But he says, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." In other words David had made up his mind; he did not halt between two opinions; his heart had felt its rest, and he was not ashamed to avow it, and to say so. Are we decided or undecided? The undecided man stands under the empyreum of perfect joy, and above the gulph of perfect misery. Your decision determines whether you shall rise till you reach the splendours of the one, or sink into the possible abyss of the other. There is no creature who occupies so momentous, so solemn a spot as man, with a soul capable of everlasting joy, or accessible to everlasting misery. We occupy a place standing on which we can hear at times unspent the hymns of the blessed, and at times unrepressed the moans of the lost. It is upon us, and with us, that the solemn charge remains. This day shall I seal that mighty change that will translate me into the joys of the one? or shall I remain the victim of that first, primal disaster, which will sink me into the depths of the other? Leave unsettled any question you like, but do not leave unsettled this question, Am I a Christian or not? Be not wise in the things of time, and a fool in the things of eternity. Use not the greatest precaution where the least is required, and use no precaution, no forethought, where everlasting joy, or everlasting sorrow are contingent upon your decision. If these things be the dreams of David, then despise them; but be consistent. If there be no heaven, if there be no hell, if there be no God, if there be no immortal soul, manfully say so; do not enter the church again, do not open the Bible, do not ask to have your children baptized, do not make a stir about Christianity, but treat these things as old wives' fables. and I will

respect you, while I pity and pray for you. But if there be a heaven, and if there be a hell, then treat these things as realities, then read, know, pray, then think, and decide that if only one soul in the universe shall be saved, that soul shall be mine. The position that thousands occupy is neither with God, nor with Satan ; their sins too dear to let them renounce them, their sense of coming judgment too real to let them deny it ; feeling that if they give up the world, they give up their pleasures ; if they give up religion, they sacrifice what they dare not ; their passions pull them one way, their conscience gives them a pull the other way ; they vibrate and oscillate between heaven and hell, forgetting that oscillation is hell as well as deliberate acceptance of it. Then, like David, decide. Let the hero forget his glory, let the rich forget his gold, but let not man's soul forget its peril, or be insensible to the bright prospects that may be its, through the blood of Christ Jesus.



Solomon.



HERE are very scanty biographical records of the life of this illustrious ruler. He was the last born of the sons of David, and his mother was Bathsheba. David appears to have taken special care of the education of Solomon. The throne which he mounted was the centre of a great nation—great even in comparison with the powerful nations of Egypt and Assyria. He had a noble presence, vast influence, great riches; and poetry, and music, and science enjoyed his patronage and support. He rid himself of all who were disposed to injure him or weaken his sovereignty, and reigned a great, wise, and powerful king. He began the building of the temple in the fourth year of his reign, and finished it in the eleventh. He reigned in all forty years. He rashly entered into an alliance with the king of Egypt, and married his daughter. But subsequent events proved that no blessing rested on an alliance not sanctioned by God. He organized a system of transport by sea, and inaugurated an extent of commercial and mercantile intercourse that had never been equalled. The fame of his wisdom spread over distant nations, and brought, among others, the Queen of Sheba, to consult him on those problems which lie at the roots of human happiness. The wealth of his kingdom is best expressed in the words, "Silver was in Jerusalem as stones." The pomp and splendour of the royal equipage excited

the admiration of all, and perhaps created some vain impressions of greatness in the heart of Solomon himself. The closing years of his splendid reign were, nevertheless, darkened by a fact—rather, an apostasy—that has left an enduring stain on the character of this prince. The deepest spring of his degeneracy was sensualism. He gave up his heart to “strange women.” They blended their idolatrous religion with their fascination and influence; and the distinctive glory of Israel paled, and at last was submerged in the gross and revolting idolatry of the surrounding nations. He lived to discover in his ruin what he failed to learn in his prosperity—that much of his latter life was “vanity of vanities”—that “the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.” His life is a lasting lesson, a lesson as instructive as his writings.

The contrast between Solomon and Him who was “a greater than Solomon,” is strong and deep. In Christ alone was no sin; all before and after Him were fallen. To “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” is the way of prosperity and peace.

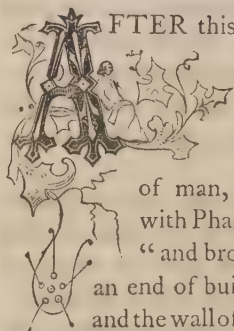
Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as are the lilies of the field, says the Redeemer. Thus there was little to be proud of in his splendour, or for our desires to seek after.

“The queen of the south came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold a greater than Solomon is here.” The wisdom of Solomon was but a cistern soon exhausted. The wisdom of the Son of God is a fountain always full and always flowing. It is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of good fruits, without partiality or hypocrisy.

“This is my beloved Son; hear Him.”



The Wisdom of Solomon.



AFTER this illustrious son of David— whose name means, “the peaceful and the perfect,” because a type of the Prince of Peace in much of his history, if not in his whole character—had ascended the throne, he indicated too plainly the weakness of man, for as we have seen, he entered into a compact with Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, and married his daughter, “and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about.” Probably the daughter of Pharaoh had previously become a proselyte or convert to the Jewish, that is the then Christian religion, before Solomon consented to marry her, otherwise the event would not have been recorded without some censure being pronounced on a deed in other circumstances unjustifiable. This appears also probable from the fact that there is no record that Solomon was ever perverted to the worship of the gods of Egypt by the instigation of Pharaoh’s daughter, while he was too successfully instigated to the worship of heathen gods by other wives he married. It seems, therefore, highly probable that she became a Christian before she became a queen, and that he, in this matter, as in his choice of wisdom, sought first the spiritual, the essential, the truly good; and to these primal and essential qualifications subordinated all others, however scriptural, and right, and estimable.

Solomon dreamed, and by the medium of this wonted way of divine communications, he heard the Lord say, "Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, Thou hast shown unto thy servant David, my father, great mercy." He thus recognized the unmerited goodness of God, and rendered Him thanks for the blessings given to his family; "and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Lord my God, thou has made thy servant king, instead of David, my father; and I am but a little child," that is, I am poor, and blind, and ignorant, and feel my great responsibility. "I know not how to go out or come in. Give, therefore, thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" All success rests with God; but faithfulness to duty, and zeal in the discharge of it, abides with us. "And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; behold, I have done according to thy words; lo! I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart." What a noble gift! There is here a practical commentary upon the words in the Gospel of St. Matthew, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things will be added unto you;" translated into plain language, let us seek the main thing first, and subordinate things will come in beautiful array, but if we seek a side aim first, we shall miss it and the main end too.

Solomon's wisdom soon found an occasion of its manifestation, an occasion most illustrative and memorable in history. Two hostesses, or keepers of inns, as the word may fairly be translated, came before Solomon, and addressed him. One woman, whose child died, asked to have the living child of the other woman, intending,

no doubt, to show it to the world as her son, and anxious to have all the credit and the comfort of a mother who, bereaved of her own, thought she could love an adopted child as deeply. The two mothers in these circumstances, disputed; the one in whose bosom was laid the dead child, was sure it was not her child, and was convinced that it had been substituted for her own living son, taken from her bosom. The other held an opposite opinion. A controversy arose, they did not use language of recrimination, or throw out fierce reproaches, but each asserted what one knew to be true, and what the other wilfully imposed as truth. The dispute was brought before this prince who had received a wise and an understanding mind. With an admirable appreciation of what was in the human heart, he said, without asking any questions, "Bring me a sword." How startling must have been the order to his officers. "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other?" Solomon justly calculated that the true mother would recoil from the perpetration of the frightful massacre of her infant, and that the false mother, out of spite probably, and in order to cover her own deception, dishonesty, and hypocrisy, would acquiesce in the judgment. The true mother cried, "O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it." But the other said, with cool, calculating, and inhuman atrocity, "Let it be neither mine or thine, but divide it." Solomon instantly saw in which bosom the tie was that knit the babe to its mother's heart; and therefore he said, "Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it, she is the mother thereof!"

This was a just and profound trial—a rich evidence of the intuitive wisdom of Solomon and of his having received in all its fulness what he earnestly asked. "God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore." He asked for wisdom, and God gave it to him. Hence he was superior to all his contemporaries, kings

and subjects. He was a first-rate philosopher, for he spake three thousand proverbs, a mere handful of which remain. These; however, are all that God meant to continue in his church; full, every one of them, full of the richest and most precious wisdom, each an apple of gold in network of silver. He was also a poet. The Song of Solomon, full of beauty, and one or two of the Psalms supposed to be his, are specimens of his poetic power. We have only samples of those that God did not see fit to retain. He was also a great botanist; for he knew all trees, from the cedar in Lebanon even down to the lowest plant, the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. He also knew all beasts and fowls, in other words, he was a zoologist; he was also an ornithologist, possessing acquaintance with the birds of the air.

He was master of all that relates to the history, instincts, and habits of insects and creeping things—an entomologist and an apiarian. "And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom." And yet, with all this wisdom, with a memory that was an encyclopædia, with an intellect acute and penetrating, with an imagination glowing and gorgeous as an eastern sunrise, Solomon was not a happy man. All his secular knowledge did not keep him from sin, nor furnish him with happiness. Secular knowledge, varied as Solomon's, is indeed power, but it may be power to sin, as well as power to do good. Only sanctified knowledge of God in Christ is power, and happiness, and peace.

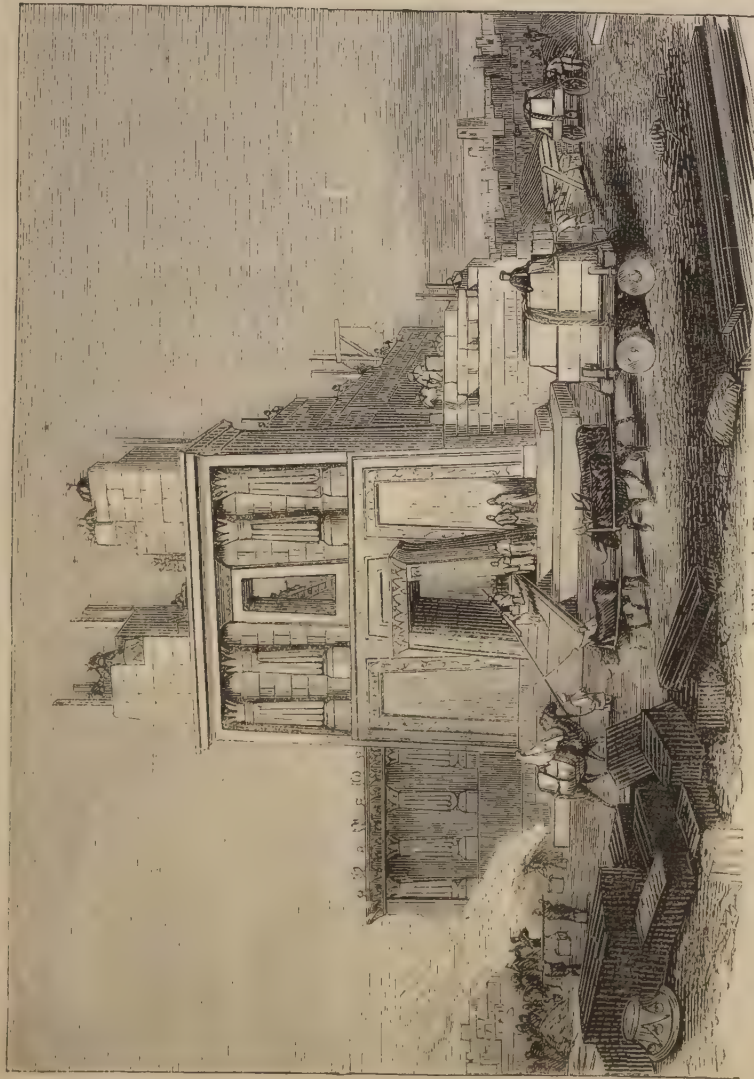
So education that is not saturated with Christian truth is not enough for children. Knowledge which draws down no instruction from the heavens is not sufficient to give true and lasting peace.



Solomon the Builder of the Temple.



T was soon spread abroad that Solomon was about to erect a temple such as the sun never shone on. Hiram, King of Tyre, a man of business as well as a monarch, heard of his intention. Desiring to make something out of the enterprise, he sent his servants to Solomon, with special offers and estimates, having heard by rumour that he reigned in the room of his father. "Hiram was ever a lover of David." Whether he was also a lover of David's Lord we have no means of determining, though from an incidental expression he seems to have recognized Jehovah as the living and the true God. But if not a lover of David's Lord, he had an intense admiration of David's heroism, greatness, genius, and character. As soon as Hiram had communicated his wish to be employed by Solomon, Solomon sent to Hiram and said, "Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the Lord his God for the wars which were about him on every side." There were no doubt other, deeper, and much less creditable reasons why God would not allow David to build Him a house ; but Solomon his son, with exquisite taste, selected the least discreditable which were perfectly true, though they were not the whole truth, and therefore he stated, On account of the incessant wars in which he was involved he was not allowed to build a house unto the Lord his God. "But now,"



Building the Temple.

says Solomon, "God hath given me rest on every side. And behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name. Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants; and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants according to all that thou shalt appoint; for thou knowest that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians." Hiram, on receiving the royal order, "rejoiced greatly;" perhaps from pure and honourable motives, perhaps out of commercial considerations; and there was nothing sinful in his joy whether it arose from the one or the other source; and therefore he said, "Blessed be the Lord this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people." This looks as if he recognized Jehovah. With a dash of selfishness, Hiram thought that something of Solomon's wisdom was seen in the selection of so competent a man as himself to take the superintendence of his works. "And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for; and I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir. My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea; and I will convey them by sea in floats." "So Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees and fir trees according to all his desire. And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty thousand measures of pure oil; thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year;" payment then being in kind.

"And King Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men. And he sent them to Lebanon," to take their share in hewing and sawing the timber. There was here displayed a piece of admirable conduct on the part of Solomon. When he raised this levy, he did not overtask the men he employed.

as is too much the tendency, some perhaps would say the necessity of modern times; but he gave them so many months to stop at Lebanon hewing wood, and so many to come home; "a month they were in Lebanon and two months at home;" that is, for one day's work they got two days' rest. Perhaps that was excessive in one direction; but it clearly proves that Solomon was not an advocate for what is called the long hour system. He resolved that while they did a fair day's work and had a fair day's pay, the people employed by him should not be made beasts of burden, overtasked, and sent to an early grave.





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SOLOMON AT THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE.

The Consecration of the Temple.



SOLOMON, recognizing the necessity and duty of raising a temple for the public worship of God, yet rose far above it in his thoughts of what was suitable to God. He owns, while he dedicates the material fane, that the heaven of heavens cannot contain God, much less the place that he had built. He shows that while an outward place of worship, and at that day of sacrifice, also, was expedient and dutiful, the Israelites were not to imagine that God was so present and so shut up therein that He could neither hear nor answer prayers, and do for them what in their exigency and trouble, they required in any other part of the world. The noblest spiritual truths thus dawned on the mind of the royal worshipper. It was not the high priest, but Solomon, a king, who knelt before the altar, and spread forth his hands, and blessed the people; and who stood up in the midst of the congregation, and prayed that God would hear in heaven his dwelling place. This suggests an important thought. When the minister of Christ in the modern visible church prays, he does not perform a priestly act, he prays just as a layman prays; it is not he that prays, it is the Christian congregation. He leads, not prays, for the people. The congregation, Peter tells us, "are royal priests;" "He

hath loved us, and made us kings and priests unto God." The officiating minister is not a priest in any sense different from that in which every lay Christian is a priest. The minister in public prayer is simply the mouth-piece of the people, necessary for order; audibly expressing the wants, and the supplications, and the prayers of the congregation.

Solomon recapitulates all the judgments and the sins that needed to be arrested or forgiven; and begs of God to hear in heaven his dwelling-place. There is scarcely an emergency he does not name, an affliction he does not anticipate.

His prayer was magnificent, not from the pomp of its language, but the spirituality and comprehensiveness of its petitions. He prays that God would fulfil his own promises, would glorify his own name. He pleads for mercy upon Israel; not because Israel had done anything that deserved it; but because He had chosen Israel and made it great for his name's sake. He pleads his own promises, and then beseeches Him to let his eyes be "open upon this house day and night; upon the place whereof Thou hast said that thou wouldest put thy name there." Then he pleads, "If thy people Israel be put to the worse before the enemy;" and he gives the reason why a nation is driven before the enemy, they have sinned;—and if, when they have sinned, they return and confess their sins and pray, "Then hear thou from heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest to them and to their fathers. In times of war—times with all the special accompaniments of the horrors of war—what more appropriate than to lift up our hearts to Him who has promised that He will be with them that are in the right, even with them that have been in the wrong, who confess their sins and forsake them, and turn from them; and will hear them in heaven his dwelling-place, and have mercy and forgive. Solomon says, "When there is no rain, because the people have sinned." The

sins of earth and the clouds of heaven have a real connection. "When there is no rain." Why? Because, the philosopher would say, there has not been sunshine enough to evaporate the water from the ocean, and carry it up in mist; and then, not cold enough to condense the vapour in the clouds, and cause it to fall in rain. That is the philosopher's solution of the phenomenon. Solomon truly says, "When there is no rain, because the people have sinned against thee." In other words, material blessings are traced to moral good; calamities in some sense or shape—we cannot always say how—are related to the sins of man. "If there be pestilence, if there be blasting, or mildew, locusts, or caterpillars;" though the whole world is not exempt, for these calamities are spread from east to west, and from north to south; but whatsoever sore or whatsoever sickness there may be, "then what prayer and what supplication soever shall be made of any man"—not priest only, but of any man—"or of all thy people Israel," when every one "shall know," not his neighbour's sin, supposed to provoke the judgment, but "his own sore and his own grief, and the plague of his own heart, and shall spread forth his hands in this house; then," says Solomon, "hear thou from heaven thy dwelling-place, and render unto every man according unto all his ways;" dealing justly, showing mercy. "For thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men; that they may fear thee, to walk in thy ways, so long as they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers." "If thy people go out to war against their enemies by the way that thou shalt send them." However much war is to be deplored, and deprecated, however dutiful to exhaust forbearance, and patience, in order to avert it; yet come it may, and we may be forced to accept it, not as a preference, but as a duty; and duty is not always choice, nor always pleasant. But, nevertheless, "when thy people pray unto thee"—the very people that go out to war toward this city which thou "hast chosen; then hear thou from the heavens their prayer and their

supplication, and maintain their cause !” “ If they be carried away into captivity ; yet, if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity ; then hear thou from the heavens and from thy dwelling-place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee.” God tells Solomon that throughout that economy He will always be in that house, and will always show reverence to it ; but it will be on condition that the children of Israel, Solomon and his descendants, shall walk in his statutes and keep his judgments in integrity of heart and in uprightness for ever. Prayer must be accompanied by clean hands. But if they will not keep his commandments, and if they go and serve other gods, and thereby apostatize from Him, then Israel shall be made a proverb and a byword among all people ; and when people look at the ruins of the temple, and ask, Why hath God done this ? they shall receive the answer that this people rejected Him, and therefore they suffered. The safety of a land lies in its moral, spiritual, and Christian character. All the battalions of Alexander, and Cæsar, and Napoleon combined, cannot protect a land undutiful to God, untrue to its obligations. On the other hand, let a nation love and honour God ; let its people do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with Him ; and God will protect and preserve it, and open up deliverances for it, in ways and by means the most unexpected, but glorious.



Queen of Sheba's Visit to Solomon.



THE Queen of Sheba seems to have been an Ethiopian queen, or, as thought by others, an Arabian queen. Josephus calls her Queen of Egypt and Ethiopia. According to an Ethiopian writer, it was by one of her merchants that she heard of Solomon. Her country was celebrated for its frankincense, gold, and precious stones. It is clear that the fame of Solomon, not merely of his religious knowledge, but of his secular and scientific attainments, had spread over all lands, and had excited an intense admiration in the breasts of royal as well as literary and scientific persons. When the Queen of Sheba heard of it, she resolved to come and see and hear this prodigy of the age—this phenomenon among kings—this rare instance of regal grandeur and of literary excellence; to test his attainments by putting to him very difficult questions, and to gratify her own thirst to know the true religion. Eastern nations delight in puzzles, in proverbs, in witty aphorisms, in expressions pregnant with precious thought, couched in few and pithy words. In the Book of Proverbs we have probably some specimens of the answers he gave to the Queen of Sheba. It may in some degree be a solution of much that seems abrupt in that book if we take it as containing a series of answers to hard and difficult questions that this talented and inquisitive queen put to him. She told him all

that was in her heart of difficulty and desire; and she brought, according to Eastern custom, a present in her hand, before she ventured to ask him for information on the questions that puzzled her. Solomon, with real condescension, did not think it beneath his dignity or his duty to lay aside questions merely political, and to instruct this royal pupil in what related to science, to literature, to religion, to the present and the future. After the Queen of Sheba had seen his wisdom, so happy, so full, so inexhaustible, and had drunk in his lessons—the magnificent palace he had built, worthy of such a royal inmate—his table, with all its luxuries—his servants, and his political ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers that poured out the wine and presented it to him—and his ascent by steps of great magnificence to the house of the Lord—there “was no more spirit in her.” She was so impressed when she compared this magnificent palace, this gorgeous furniture, this rich wisdom, this wonderful teaching, with her own barbarous and semi-savage state as the ruler of Bedouins and wandering Arabs, and unsettled and restless tribes, whose clothing by day was their only covering by night, that there was no more spirit in her; she was overwhelmed. She made a very apposite remark to the king. “I heard a great deal about your splendour, I heard the report of your wisdom, but I had no idea that the one was so magnificent and the other so inexhaustible; and now I see with mine own eyes and hear with mine own ears, and I am more than astonished at all I have seen.” May there not be here a lesson on a loftier level? The woman of Samaria heard Christ’s excellence and wisdom, and was struck with what she heard. When she returned and told her countrymen, and they came, and saw, and heard, they said they needed not now her testimony; for they had personally seen, and could now believe and adore. When we become acquainted with that blessed Saviour, that true Sacrifice, that perfect High Priest, that holy and beautiful Example, and discover how completely his precious blood atones:

what sympathy He has with our sufferings, what ministry he offers to our wants, his promises, the hopes, and joys, and glory He offers, we too shall be able to say, "It was a true report that we heard in the sermon of that preacher; but now our eyes have seen; and, behold, the half was not told us of his wisdom, and riches, and grace, and love. There is no evidence of the truth of the Bible equal to personal experimental acquaintance with it. Arguments leave cold conclusions; but he who reads and studies the Bible, and makes himself master of it, and is taught by that Spirit for whom he prays, will say, "I have heard much about the Bible, but I never thought it was so rich in all that is good and precious, till I crossed the threshold, entered myself, and breathed its air, and basked in its sunshine; and he too perhaps will add, "Happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel."

Such is the history of the visit of the Queen of Sheba, such the gratification she derived by personal acquaintance with one of whom she had heard so much; and such are the expressions of thanksgiving with which she retires from his royal presence. "And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones; there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. And King Solomon gave unto the Queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked."

We admire in the Queen of Sheba the spirit of inquiry which would be satisfied with no second-hand information, the distance she travelled, the sacrifices she made, and the teachableness she displayed as a royal pupil of a royal teacher. We ought to remember a greater than Solomon is here. Do we hear Him in his word, rely on his divine offering, and look for his glorious return? Let not the Queen of Sheba be a witness against us at that day.

Solomon's Lesson for the Young.



REMEMBER now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them (Eccles. xii. 1). The royal preacher impresses living religion on the young. What is real religion? What is it to be a Christian—that is, to remember one's Creator in the days of youth? Real religion is not an ornament to be assumed and displayed in the sight of mankind; it is not a mere profession, however eloquent or consistently sustained, without a counterpart within; it is not a mere penance that one does, in order to purchase heaven, or to work one's way to heaven; for the paths of real religion are paths of pleasantness and peace. It is not the renunciation of all that is beautiful and tasteful in the world, or separation mechanically from the world, in order not to be of the world. It is not a cloud upon the face, nor a peculiar tone in one's speech; it is neither "meat nor drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost." Or, to define it yet more fully, it is loving God as our Father; it is resting upon Jesus as the only foundation of our best and brightest hopes; it is looking to, praying for, and having the Holy Spirit of God to regenerate and sanctify our hearts; it is devotedness to God, fervency in prayer, yet not slothfulness in business. It is loving God's Book better than

Solomon's Fleet.

all books, preferring God's day to all days, and a day in his courts to a thousand anywhere else. It is an influence within, that is felt rather than heard without; for it is the peculiarity of real religion that it does not speak itself, and say, "Here am I;" it speaks through everything, influences every action, makes its life felt in all a man is, says, and does.

The religion thus enjoined is especially early religion. "Remember now thy Creator." In what days? "In the days of thy youth." "They that seek me early," is a beautiful promise, "shall find me." And the Saviour welcomed even babes to his bosom, rejoicing that, "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God hath perfected praise." How beautiful and submissive was the piety of the youthful Samuel, of Abijah, or of young Timothy, taught by his mother and grandmother to know the Scriptures from his childhood, and thereby made wise unto salvation. Early piety is the first-fruits of life laid upon the altar. It is the flower offered in its prime, and it is no mean sacrifice. If it were asking the young to do something that would make all life before them a dungeon, one would do so with great regret; but when we invite the young to be Christians by seeking the inspiration that can make them so, we invite them to be happy, to taste life's purest, most enduring, and unmingled happiness.

There are reasons especially for early piety. Youth is the most susceptible season. The mind is less clouded by prejudice; the heart is not yet trodden hard by the feet of this world's traffic; the conscience is not loaded, irritated, exasperated by the sense and shadow of long and inveterate wrong doing. There are fewer thorns and fewer weeds in the soil of the human heart. The precious seed may be cast in more easily. The heart, the soil, is more receptive and the result will be, that such seed has not been cast upon the wayside to be trodden under foot, or to be picked up by the fowls of the air, but into good and softened soil, to grow up, and

bear much fruit to the glory of God. Lose the season of youth, and you lose, not the only time of becoming savingly acquainted with God—that would be sad—but the very best time of becoming so. The coin may have the image impressed upon it best when it is soft, and when it has become hard the impression will not be effaceable by the lapse of years. Sanctify youth, therefore, while you have it. It will not take one single joy from your heart, or diminish one bright and beautiful hope within you. It will make life's joys better by sweetening them with true religion, and it will make old age peaceful by the recollection of a life that has not been squandered, but hoarded, and dedicated to God. It is in youth that those habits are formed that are most lasting. Impressions made upon the young, it is true, are often very evanescent, but impressions to be made upon the aged are almost impossible. Better, therefore, risk impressions that may occasionally fade, than attempt to make impressions where the heart is hardened, and cannot be made susceptible of them. What is habit? It has often been called very justly “a second nature.” It is when we are young that we form habits. It is when we grow old that these habits become fixtures. The habits are formed in our early days, and those habits thus formed are fixed in the rest of the days that remain. It is therefore most important that, whatever habits we form while we are young, we should remember they will likely last with us to the grave. Let us seek now that inspiration, that only Teacher, that inner Creator, who can give the heart an inclination that we shall never regret, and life those habits that, beautiful in youth, will be rich in consolatory recollections, when “the strong men shall bow themselves, and those that look out of the windows be darkened.”

Nothing can keep youth right except real, Scriptural, evangelical Christianity. There is no law, motive, object, incentive, that can be a substitute for it. Ancient or modern philosophy will not do. The mere fear of man may keep you right when man looks on, but

it will fail to be of any service when man is not looking on. Even conscience, which retains in many much of its original greatness, may have a wrong standard, or may be drugged, stupified, and set asleep, or by the passions bribed to be quiet, till they have had their swing and full indulgence. But if you have this remembrance of your Creator, this real religion, then in poverty, should that be your lot, there will be no loss that this will not be a compensation for. In affliction, you will have no pang that this will not soothe and heal. You will be free in outward slavery; you will be patient in pining sickness; you will be unmoved amid unmerited reproach. You will feel in high and low places, in life's open and public roads, and in life's sequestered and solitary ones, "Thou God seest me"—a spring of action, and a directory in life that nothing can parallel, and nothing else can be a substitute for.

The most satisfying evidence of Christian character is early piety. When an old man, worn out with the pleasures, the follies, frailties, and vanities of life, has recourse to religion and to God, he does so when he has nothing else to flee to—it is a last resource. We are thankful when it is even that; for Jesus came into the world to save, not only the chiefest, but the oldest sinner also. But when we see religion accepted and welcomed in the heyday of youth, we recognize a testimony given to its excellence, its power, and its truth, that nothing else can equal. In the blaze of the world's light, the young Christian prays, "Lord, lift Thou upon me the light of thy countenance." Amid the abundance of the world's good things he prays, "Lord, evermore give us that living bread." When all around him is bright, he feels the want of another and a higher sunshine; and when all in his possession is abundance, he feels a want of that heavenly bread which God alone can supply; and when all within him is hope, he still feels that there is a hope that maketh not ashamed that he must have, or he cannot be happy. The strongest credential of the glory, truth, and power

of religion is early conversion to God. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

It is early piety that ensures the full enjoyment of all the blessings of religion. It is they that seek God early who shall find Him. It is they who have longest known God; and have longest lived under the influence of religion, for whom God has prepared one of the highest, brightest, and happiest of the many mansions which Christ has gone to prepare. There are degrees of happiness in heaven. Each vessel will be full, but the larger vessel will contain more than the smaller. They who have made the greatest progress in religion on earth will surely be fitted to enter upon a higher level in that rest that remaineth for the people of God, being made capable of joys, and employments, and delights, of which they who have late known Christ, and have been converted in old age, are in a great measure incapable. Early piety is the best preparation for extended usefulness. It is they on whom religion has early made a deep impression, in whose life it will show itself most powerfully and permanently beneficent. It is the saint who has received the earliest unction from the Holy One, who will be in after life the most devoted servant to God. It has been remarked by those who have watched the Christian character, that the most eminent and useful ministers of Christ have been called to God early in life; and though there are splendid exceptions, for which we praise God, yet the law that seems to run through the providential dealings of God is, that they who have been earliest impressed have received impressions the deepest and most lasting, and in the remainder of their life they are the most efficient servants and ministers of the Lord.

"Remember *now* thy Creator." To-morrow is not mine, for it has not yet come. Yesterday is not mine, for it is past. To-day is mine, for it now is. God says, "Seek me early," in the time that

is yours "and you shall find me." He does not say, "Procrastinate till to-morrow," and that He will be found by you then. Let us remember that the longer we put off all solemn personal thought about salvation, the less probable our salvation becomes. Procrastination grows in strength just like any other passion, the longer it is indulged. He who can put off all thought about his religious and spiritual condition to-day, will put it off to-morrow with greater ease and with vastly greater success.

Nor are we sure, if we neglect the great salvation to-day, that we shall see to-morrow at all. God has not mortgaged to-morrow to any one; He has not promised that you shall live twenty-four hours more; at least if He has, we have not heard nor read the promise. Is it reasonable to expect that we shall be allowed to expend the life that God has given in pouring contempt upon his grace, and despising the great salvation that He has provided?

Such procrastination is great sin. The fact that a person procrastinates, or puts off a duty till to-morrow, is evidence that He knows his duty, but that He is not prepared to discharge it. You put off till to-morrow what you feel to be duty obligatory to-day, and (disguise it as you like, explain it, soften it as you like) it is simply hearing God say, "Do this," and you replying, "I will not do it." God says, "Do this to-day;" but if you refuse to do it to-day, it is refusing to do it at all. Felix put off the consideration of the claims of the gospel to a more convenient season; but there is no record that that season came. And when you put off thoughts about religion till to-morrow, you do not first sin and then confess your sins; but you positively confess your sins, and then go and deliberately commit them. It is not, "Remember to-morrow;" but "Remember now thy Creator" this day, the only one amid the days of your youth that you can call thoroughly your own.

Continued rejection of the truth, which is otherwise worded by the Apostle Paul as real neglect, for he does not say, "How shall

we escape if we *reject*," but what is equivalent to it, "if we neglect so great salvation?"—I say, ceaseless neglect of the great salvation provokes God ultimately to withdraw the offers of the gospel altogether. Where are the seven churches of Asia? Their ruins testify that they knew their day, and they availed themselves not of it. In Jerusalem the mosque of Omar is now where the temple once stood; and the cry of the muezzin is heard where David's Psalms were sung before; and why? "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

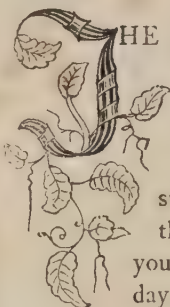
Those who hear truth, duty, privilege to-day, and yet neglect it, are rendering themselves more and more fit to reject it when to-morrow comes. They who have neglected in the past, will be more and more able to reject what is offered to them in the future. There is a hardening or a softening influence going on in every man who hears the gospel. We are either feeling it the savour of life, or the savour of death. Our hearts are either becoming more tender, susceptible, deeply and spiritually impressed, or they are becoming harder, more obdurate, and less open to the urgent calls and privileges of the gospel of Christ. It is a very solemn thought that no man comes into the house of God, and retires as he entered. He has carried away with him an influence that will make him more ready to listen to the gospel, or more ready to reject it. That influence will go with you; and when you hear the same truths repeated, in more urgent and penetrating accents perhaps, you will be more able to repel, resist, and despise them. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." If you will hear his voice to-day, your heart will not be hardened; but if you will not hear his voice to-day, then your heart will be hardened. And after the heart is thoroughly hardened, the commission may come from the skies, "Cut down that tree: it is a cumberer of the ground." It may

be that that commission was to be executed on some of us, but that the great Mediator has interposed, and pleaded, "Lord, spare it another year. If it bring forth fruit, well. If not, then cut it down."

If Solomon had asked you to undergo a penance, or to make a great sacrifice, or to engage in some arduous uphill, vexatious pursuit, even then one would employ all the argument, eloquence, and energy, that a soul impressed by a deep sense of real religion could possibly employ; but he invites you to be happy. Why procrastinate being happy? Why drink from a broken cistern with the fountain at hand? Why live in the shadow, when you may in the sunshine? Why walk with the world where all is peril, snare, vanity, and vexation, and refuse to walk with God, where the walk is pleasantness on earth, and everlasting peace, when time shall be no more?



Solomon the Preacher.



THE last two chapters of Ecclesiastes contain the ripest thoughts and counsels of the royal preacher. The eleventh chapter is strictly the preface to the twelfth and the twelfth is the corollary that flows from it.

But the eleventh begins with clear, practical advice, in such words as these, "Cast thy bread upon the waters," that is, give away of your beneficence to the poor, and you will find that though you experience no blessing to-day or to-morrow, in some shape it will return to you with interest. "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth." This verse ought to be read properly, "Give a portion to seven parts, and even to eight, for thou knowest not which shall prosper." I would explain it thus; if I wished to convey to a distant land a cargo very valuable, and if I were not acquainted, as they were not in ancient times, with the modern and most valuable system of insurance, instead of sending all my cargo by one ship, and committing it to one venture, so that if that ship were lost, I should lose all; I would rather divide it among seven ships, for some of the seven would be sure to arrive in safety at the desired haven. It is practical common sense. Do not stake all that you have upon a single result; use good sense, as well as act on Christian principle; for practical arrangements in this economy are not incompatible with the high principles that fit the life to come.

He then tells us, "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth; and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be," it is too heavy for you to lift up again, and it cannot of itself take root again. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow." You must, therefore, do the good that you can with the means that you have, and not be afraid of contingencies which never may occur, or wait for opportunities which may not present themselves. "In the morning," therefore, "sow thy seed," that is, in spring, "and in the evening," that is, the harvest, "withhold not thine hand;" for "thou knowest not whether shall prosper." Then he says, "But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness," that is to say, that this life will be its twilight, its close. Speaking then to the young, he says, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth." I am very doubtful if they interpret this passage aright who think it is a piece of sacred irony or sacred sarcasm. Some have translated it as if it were, "Well, rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, let thy heart cheer thee, walk after the lusts and appetites of your own heart, but recollect what will be the consequence of these things." I think, on the contrary, the preacher means, Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, enjoy the sunshine of life, enjoy all that is beautiful around you, but always carry with you a sense of the presence of God, and your responsibility to Him. It is saying to the young, Rejoice in thy "youth." It is as natural for a child to laugh, for a young man to be happy, as it is for the winds to blow and the streams to roll; and it would be a very sad fact if it were otherwise. Indulge your preference, whatever that preference may be, walk in the way of thine heart; and in the sight of thine eyes, whatever they may desire, but carry with you this regulating principle, and this dominating recollection which will keep you from the evil, and guide you to the good; and remember throughout, that for

all this, whether good or evil, God will bring you into judgment. In the twelfth chapter, the preacher presents the most beautiful and picturesque representations of man that one can select from any part of the Bible, still more from any uninspired writer, ancient or modern. It is the description of the architecture of the house in which man lives; a beautiful, apposite, and suggestive picture. It is not possible that Solomon could have written it uninstructed by a higher inspiration. But otherwise, we know that he, like the rest of the writers of the Old Testament Scriptures, wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. He says, first of all, Remember thy Creator, just when that remembrance will be sweetest, "in the days of thy youth." Do not think that religion will make youth sad, on the contrary, it will make it more happy. It makes life's early days smooth, and life's later days less burdensome. And remember it especially when the remembrance of God will make the deepest and the most plastic impression upon the heart, before those evil days those sad and gloomy days come when the pleasure that you now feel in life shall be removed, and the weariness, and in some degree the gloom of old age shall overtake you. He gives next a truly graphic picture of what may be expected in old age: "While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkness, nor the clouds return after the rain." That is a picture of the horizon as it seems to him, not that the sun does not shine upon an old man's grey hairs, as it shines upon the babe's bright brow, but that it appears very different to the one from what it does to the other.

The truth is, sunshine or clouds do not come from without, they proceed from within. A very sad and heavy heart will make your own bright fireside look sad; and a very joyous heart will light up a dungeon's gloom with all the brightness of noon day. It is what the inner man is that constitutes the joy or the sadness of the outer world. Let all be right within, and all will respond in music from without.

Solomon adds, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." What absurdity it is to say that there is no allusion to immortality in the Old Testament, or to pretend, as some have attempted to do, that there is no proof of a hereafter in the Old Testament Scriptures. Here is a most plain and explicit testimony that man is composed of two parts—one part that is the efflorescence of dust, and that returns to dust again ; and a part that is not dust, and of whom "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" was never spoken—namely, the immortal and the precious soul. This is one of the thoughts that most intensely lighten the forebodings of death to a Christian—that when that hour comes to him which comes to all, it is simply the house, the frail house, in which he has sojourned for a season, falling to pieces by the touch of the messenger of God ; while the man himself, that is, the soul, unscathed, uninjured, uninterrupted, not for a moment unconscious, returns upward on outspread pinion, and finds its rest and its home in the bosom of God. To a real Christian, there is no such thing, in the vulgar sense of the word, as death ; there is transition, but there is no extinction ; there is exchange, but there is no destruction of life. There is not even, I believe, in the case of a Christian, a suspension of the continuity of conscious life from the moment that he becomes ill to the moment that he is in the presence of God. It is true there is pain ; there must be the agony of a dissolving frame that will be penalty to the wicked, but it is no penalty to the child of God ; it is one of the pains that he must feel, as he feels the cold weather and the biting frosts ; but still it is not in his case a curse. All he does is to lay aside this outer robe in which he has ministered as a Levite in the outer temple, leaving it to be taken care of by Him who made it, and takes his flight, and enters, a holy and officiating priest, into the true holy place, and so is for ever with the Lord.

Having thus described the importance of learning these things, and given also this picturesque representation of old age, not more picturesque than it is true, he says of all recorded in the Book of which this chapter is the last, "I have tasted every pleasure, I have plunged into every folly, I have got every enjoyment"—as he tells us in the second chapter, "I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure : and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad : and of mirth, What doeth it ? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom ; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works ; I builded me houses ; I planted me vineyards ; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits ; I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees ; I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house ; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me : I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces"—in short, he got every enjoyment that this world could get ; and what was his opinion of it all ? "Vanity of vanities ;" and still worse, he adds, "vexation of spirit." Therefore the experiment whether the springs of earth can minister enjoyment to man does not remain to be made ; the experiment has been made, and made in the most favourable circumstances, made when there was no restriction, and the result of it all was, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Chesterfield, the accomplished writer—more accomplished in writing upon the external courtesies of life than acquainted with its inner and its moral excellences—said when he was approaching death, "I have been behind the scenes, and know how true Solomon spoke when he said, 'Vanity of vanities.'" And Goëthe, a most accomplished German genius, said, "I am

now fourscore years old, and I can sincerely say I have not had a single minute's true happiness in all my life." He was a man who repudiated Christianity—its fears, its hopes, its prospects. Byron was another; the poem that he wrote when near his end was a proof of utter, bitter, and painful disappointment in all he had experienced in life. And the reason is plain enough. It is evidence of man's fall that he tries to find enjoyment on earth; but it is the evidence of the grandeur of man's soul that he will be disappointed in trying to satisfy it from the things of this life.

Then he adds, "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words; and that which was written was upright, even words of truth." Here is a precedent for preachers. We should not only try to find instructive thoughts, but we should try to clothe them in what are the most "acceptable words." First of all, let us have instructive thoughts; and when that is attained, find acceptable or agreeable words.

He then describes the nature of such words, and comes to "the conclusion of the whole matter." He says, "In making of books there is no end;" you may make as many as you please, you will not accomplish the great result that you desire; "and much study is a weariness of the flesh." We are all working men; I believe from the prime minister down to the humblest peasant at the plough, or the poorest labourer on the streets of London, we are all working men. And you may depend upon it that they that use the hand, as the carpenter does, or the foot, as the postman does, live longer and are not so soon conscious of a weariness of the flesh, as they that use that more delicate instrument called the brain, the use of which exhausts more and shortens life sooner.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments." Fear God, worship Him, love Him, trust in Him, rejoice in Him, and keep his commandments as the proof and evidence of your confidence in Him and obedience to

Him. "For this," at least, "is the whole duty of man." "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Let the young store their memory with such practical precepts as these ; let the aged gladden their declining years with the joyous hopes that are here indicated.



The Glories of a Greater than Solomon.



HE seventy-second Psalm is a prophecy of the future glory of the Son of God, the King of Zion, the Prince of the kings of the earth. The prayer is addressed to the Father to give unto him whom He hath set on his holy hill those judgments and that righteousness which belong to Him in his royal capacity, and which it is his province to fulfil over all the earth. The prediction concerning Him is that "He shall judge thy people," that is, the Gentiles, not with unrighteousness or unfairness, but "with righteousness; and the poor," who are apt to be despised in the decisions or in the judgments of this world, "shall then be heard, and defended, and ministered to, as much as the great, the wealthy, and the powerful." It is also promised that Messiah "shall judge the poor of the people;" that just as his gospel was preached to the poor, so his care and sympathy shall be manifested in their defence. The nations converted to Him shall fear Him as long as the sun and moon endure; that is, for ever throughout all generations.

Then the symbol under which this influence of the gospel preached faithfully among the nations of the earth is that "He shall come down,"—his influence—"like rain upon the mown grass," softly and gently like the showers of April that water the earth, and

make the spring bud and burst forth into the glories of summer. The promise is that in his days not the wicked usurper, but the righteous man shall flourish. At present matters are often so much the opposite, that even David stumbled and began to feel as if there were no God, till he went into the sanctuary, and then the matter was explained to him. But in that day when Christ shall reign over all the earth, the righteous man shall be the prosperous man, and only he; and abundance of peace shall spread over all the earth as long as the moon endureth, that is, for ever. The extent of his dominion will be from one sea to another: from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, from the Black Sea to the Caspian, over the Atlantic and in the isles of the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the German Sea; and from the River Jordan to the uttermost ends of the habitable globe.

And he adds, they that dwell now in the wilderness shall then bow before him; and they that are his enemies shall be depressed or humbled, for they shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring Him presents expressive of their loyalty to Him; and the kings of the east shall offer to Him gifts also expressive of their allegiance to Him. Yea, all kings, as such and in their royal capacity, shall cast their crowns before Him, and all nations in their national capacities shall express their homage and their adoration and their service to Him; for they will see what is here promised, that He shall deliver the needy when he crieth, and the poor, and him that hath no helper. While He shall live unto Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; that is, all that is rich and great in Sheba; prayer shall be made to Him, not as it is in our translation, *for him*, continually; and He shall be daily praised.

And then the very handful of corn in the earth that now grows on the tops of the mountains, so small that no harvest can be expected from it, shall then be so blessed and so prosper that the fruit thereof shall be like Lebanon; and they of that city that hath foundations,

whose builder and maker is God, shall flourish and grow up like the very grass of the earth.

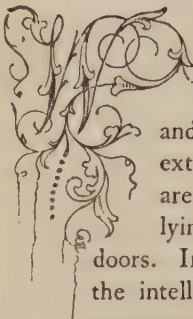
Then the thrilling prediction closes the Psalm, his name above all sectarian names, all denominational or distinctive names; all names of saints or angels, or priest, or minister, or apostle, shall endure for ever; his name alone shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be made happy in Him, and all nations shall adore and praise and bless him.

Then concludes the Psalm, Blessed or praised, or glorified, be the Lord God, the God of Israel, for it will be felt then what he predicts now, that He only doeth wondrous things. And then he prays that this glorious name may be praised, "Hallowed be thy glorious name for ever." And he prays, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory." And he concludes, as the expression of the earnestness of his wish, "Amen and Amen," that is, "So be it."

The last verse states that "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." Are ended when? Only when Christ's name is exalted above every name, when the whole earth is filled with his glory; when all are blessed in Him, and all nations call Him blessed; then David's prayers will be translated into David's praise; for prayer shall only end by being resolved into praise.



Conclusion.



WHAT changes have taken place on the earth, in society and in the world at large, since the days of the patriarchs ! In the material world, steam and electricity have brought the distant near to an extent ancient seers never dreamed of. Continents are near neighbours, nations are sisters, and the outlying tribes of the earth are placed almost at our doors. In the literary world, the printing press has increased the intellectual triumph which it records. The modern newspaper has ceased to be regarded as a marvel, while it remains one of the greatest. What is spoken in secret to-day will be echoing over the world to-morrow. The discussions and debates that in ancient times could be heard by a handful are, in a few hours, printed, and spread, and read by nations. Arcturus, Orion, and the Pleiades are weighed, and their distances are determined with an accuracy literally astonishing. The fauna and flora of the earth, existing long before man appeared, are brought up into light, and classified, and worked into results full of information, interest, and beauty. A famine in one country is now impossible while there is plenty in another. The Abrahams and Jacobs of the nineteenth century in bad years need not travel to distant lands in search of corn. Our ships bring the abundance of Russia, Germany, and America to cover the necessities of England. The days spent in St. Paul's voyage are now turned into hours. The Great Eastern

would hold all the freights of all the ships of Solomon. London exceeds in population Jerusalem, Rome, and Athens, and in wealth the whole ancient world. The British Museum contains more books than Alexandria and all its cotemporary libraries together. In these and other respects, the changes that have taken place are stupendous. Were Abraham, or Solomon, or David to rise from their graves, and visit Paris, or New York, or London, they would not believe they are cities of that world they left, or, indeed, the creations of men.

If we turn to the religious and moral changes that have passed upon the world since Abraham dwelt in his tent, or Job sat on his Eastern plains, or Solomon amazed the Queen of Sheba by the display of the splendour of his palace, we shall find the revolution no less remarkable. Christianity is no longer veiled in types and symbols, and is accepted and gloried in by prince, noble, and peasant. Its inspiration gives tone and purity to laws, customs, and institutions. Life is secure, and its destruction sure to be avenged; property is guarded, whether it be the furniture of a cottage, or the precious contents of a palace. Each man's house is his castle, and all the laws of England lend it security and sacredness. Schools for the education of children, and universities for the instruction of scholars, are universal. Wherever man is found, a place of worship is provided, and the gospel is preached, and Bibles are sown as seed in spring. What was once a national cistern has become a world-wide fountain. Where Jews only drank, millions of every nation, kindred, and tongue now slake their thirst, and are refreshed and made happy.

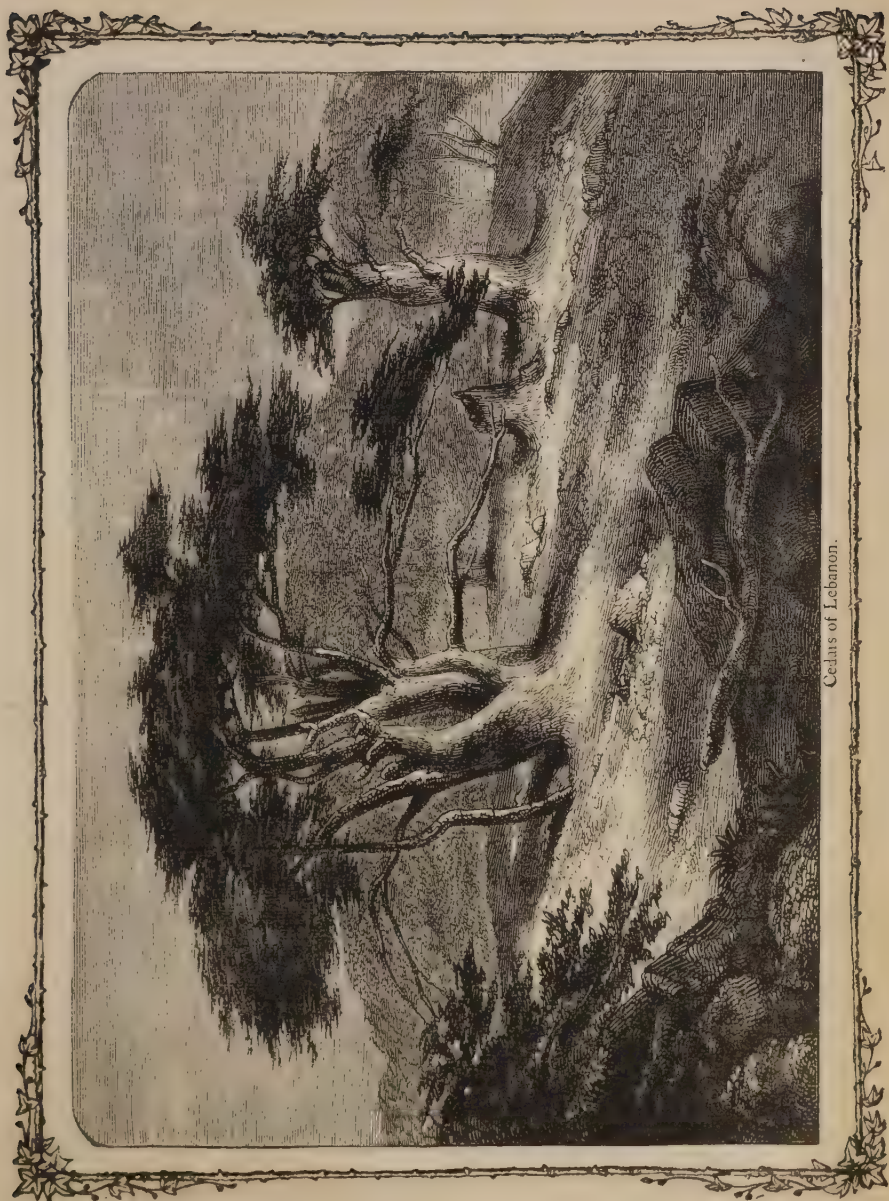
God is in history far more visible than in Nature. We can trace the divine footprints in the land of Ur of the Chaldees—in the life of the ancient emir and patriarch Job—in Goshen, in the land of Egypt—in the complicated events of the birth, anointing, victories, and death of David—in the palace, and the temple, and the schools of the prophets—in the glories of Solomon's reign. We recognize the divine mercy forgiving their sins, overruling their errors, and out

of their falls evolving new truths, and scattering unexpected blessings, and hopes, and joys. We can see the divine power raising Joseph to high office for good—opening the Red Sea for the transit of his own—cleaving the rock, that his people might not die of thirst—and raining bread from heaven, that they might have enough to eat. We hear God in the ripples and streams of individual life, and in the cataracts and torrents of national progress: “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.”

In our retrospect of the lives and lessons of the ancient patriarchs, we must remember, for our profit, the apostolic lesson, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.”

These patriarchs have long ago entered into rest, their trials and their mission are ended, they now shine as stars in the firmament of heaven; being dead, they yet speak on earth. Like a shining cloud, they are now above and around us. But brilliant as was their past, and glorious as is their present, we are not to look to them as if they could help us, but to Jesus only. Cherish their memory with an admiring feeling, recount their virtues with praise to God, but in life's troubled sea, in sickness, sorrow, or at seventy, do not look to them. They have nothing to spare, and no commission to give. This would be looking at the stars at noon, at the servant while the sovereign is present.

Looking to Christ alone, you will see greater glory than shines from all creation; you will see in Him all things yours, life and death, things present and things to come, impossibilities no longer insuperable difficulties, no more discouragements, and all things working together for your present and everlasting good. The far distant draws near, and the long promised becomes certain, and all men, from Abraham downward to the most gifted or excellent of living



Cedars of Lebanon.

men, take their predestined and proper place, and shine in a lustre given them from the throne, not their own. Look to Him alone as the great sin-bearer, laying on Him the burden of our sins, casting on Him all our cares, looking for deliverance from everlasting death through his blood only, and a right to eternal glory through his righteousness only. Look to Him as your Representative, Mediator, and Advocate with the Father, and ever living to make intercession for us. Does the law condemn? He answers, "I have magnified it." Does Satan cry, Cut it down? Jesus answers, "Spare another year." Do we despond? He replies, "I will never leave or forsake thee."

Avert your eyes from the most illustrious of the patriarchs, and "in all time of your wealth, in all time of your tribulation, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment," "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world." There is no distance from which the soaring thought may not rise to Him, no noise or tumult in which the cry of the heart may not be heard by Him, no difficulty which He is unwilling or unable to solve, no interest, however tiny or trivial, which He will not take care of. He holds death a conquered victim in the hand that once was nailed to the Cross. There is no believer's grave into which light does not now shine from a broken sepulchre in Arimathea. "Yea, when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

No patriarch died an atonement for me. No patriarch lives to intercede for me. Neither Abraham, Isaac, nor Jacob are able to save, or are the resurrection and the life. To them—the noblest, best, and brightest of them all—I am not to look up. They are faint stars. Jesus is the Sun of Righteousness. They are dim in his splendour, and poor beside his riches. Nor are we to look to them as perfect patterns or examples. They were sinners such as we are, and their lives often diverged from the perfect example of Jesus. They all were fallen, all were flawed, all had much that needed par-

don, nothing that constituted merit. We are to follow them just in as far as they followed Christ. They are instances of true believers fainting, or falling, or conquering amid the twilight of the everlasting gospel, and amid difficulties, dangers, and opposition, neither exhausted nor uncommon now. So far, their lives are most instructive, the lights and shadows in them full of interest, and the lessons we may read as we study them, practical and rich in suggestions. But for all that relates to our pardon, our progress, or prospects beyond the grave, and our hopes of that future which dawns brighter and draws nearer every day, for all that strengthens and encourages to run with patience the race set before us, we must look to Him only who is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Christ alone was and is the Perfect One, the everlasting and divine exception in the current of humanity, the only Being who wore our nature, breathed our air, and trod our earth, in whom was no fault or flaw, to whom all creation will one day turn with adoring praise, and in whom all ages will be glorified, and from whom all blessings will continually flow over and upon a happy universe. To whom can we go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life. We believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Pale all stars, however bright! fade all flickering lights! The Sun of Righteousness has risen with healing in his wings.



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